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A QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF REQUIRED INTERNSHIPS:
THE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College of Education
at the University of Kentucky

By

Elizabeth Ann James

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Jeff Bieber, Professor of Educational Policy Studies and

Evaluation Lexington, Kentucky

2018

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

A QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF REQUIRED INTERNSHIPS: THE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

Internships are increasingly popular in higher education (Coco, 2000; Divine et al., 2007). One reason for the increase is the benefits, both perceived and documented, associated with them (Divine et al., 2007). In addition to offering internships as electives, some programs have even begun requiring them of all students (Klein & Weiss, 2011). The policy change from elective to required internships has been evaluated very little, if at all, even though mandatory internships result in a substantial increase in cost and commitment for the departments that implement them (Divine et al., 2007).

This study analyzed survey and interview data from students (past and present) who participated in a required internship through an Equine Science and Management degree program at a major land grant institution that adopted a mandatory internship requirement in 2007. The intent of the study was to deepen the understanding of the effects of a mandatory internship policy in higher education from the students' perspective. Specifically of interest were the benefits students gain from participating in mandatory internships, their perception of the mandatory internship policy, and whether the primary reason students participated in an internship influenced the experience. A mixed-methods approach was used to identify statistically significant results and provide an in-depth understanding of the results.

This study revealed that the vast majority of students who participated in a mandatory internship recognized a variety of benefits from it, viewed the experience as beneficial, and supported the policy of requiring internships. It was demonstrated that mandatory internships can empower students and aid in their professionalization. Participants also credited their internship more than their overall undergraduate experience for better preparing them at several important career skills including problem solving, job interviewing, networking, resume writing, oral presentation, interpersonal communication, and written communication. Furthermore, this study identified several statistically

significant relationships between the primary reason students participated in an internship and how beneficially they view it, how much they believe it contributed to their current job, and how well it prepared them at specific career skills. The results of this study provide insight into the benefits of a mandatory internship policy from the students' perspective.

KEYWORDS: Internships, Benefits, Mandatory,
Career Skills, Students' Perspective

Elizabeth Ann James
April 25, 2018

A QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF REQUIRED INTERNSHIPS:
THE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated:

To Jesus Christ who through it made the words “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13) more real than I ever knew and who with it will do extraordinary things.

To my incredible husband, Dan, who leads by example, loves in all circumstances, inspires everyone to do their best, and always, always brings out the best in me.

To my Mom who has always been an endless source of celebration at the high points, pep talks at the low points and my cheerleader, sounding board, and editor in between.

To my Dad who encourages me to accomplish my goals and challenges me to keep setting them.

To my brother, Andre, who never fails to make me laugh during the best of times, the worst of times, and when I need it most.

To my extended family who are ever ready to celebrate my successes.

To my friends, my tribe, the monkeys in my circus, for you I am forever grateful, by you I am forever humbled, and because of you I am forever better.

And finally, to my beautiful daughter, Isabella, from the moment you were born you have been my favorite distraction, the best part of every day, and the heart of everything I do. No matter what I accomplish in my life, it will forever pale in comparison to the blessing of having you.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

A photographer once showed the same picture to 1,000 people and asked them to hypothesize the context in which the photo was taken. As the story goes, no one guessed the right context and no two responses were the same. Internships are like that; each one is surrounded by its own unique circumstances and no two experiences are identical.

Internships are not a modern idea; the concept of experiential learning dates back as far as Aristotle (Joplin, 1981). However, the popularity of internships has increased significantly in recent years (Coco, 2000). One explanation for this increase is the numerous benefits associated with internships for students, employers, and colleges or universities (the terms ‘colleges’ and ‘university’ are used interchangeably). Studies have shown that students who have completed internships earn higher starting salaries; report greater job satisfaction; receive more job offers and are offered jobs more quickly; and display improved job-related skills, better interviewing skills, and better career preparation (Coco, 2000; Divine et al., 2007; Gault et al., 2000; Knemeyer & Murphy, 2002; Taylor, 1988).

Employers report benefits of student internships that include having the first choice of students they perceive to be the best; getting low cost, if not free, part time help; and the belief that they are making better hiring decision and creating a valuable network with colleges and faculty (Coco, 2000; Divine et al., 2007; Knemeyer & Murphy, 2002; Thiel & Hartley, 1997). Universities extoll and support internships for their students because the availability of these experiences improves a school’s academic reputation; piques the interest of students who are being recruited; catches the attention of

parents who want the best undergraduate experience for their children, leads to enhanced student success, opens the door for alternative forms of funding and networking within the local communities and stakeholders, and creates opportunities for external curricular assessment (Divine et al., 2007; Gault et al., 2000; Thiel & Hartley, 1997).

The perceived and documented benefits of internships have inspired some higher education programs to require them for all students rather than keep with the voluntary nature of internships they had previously advocated (Klein & Weiss, 2011). Yet this policy change from optional to mandatory internships has been evaluated very little, if at all, even though these required internships result in a substantial increase in cost and commitment for the departments that implement them (Divine et al., 2007). Although there exists a body of research related to internships, not all of it is supportive, and the majority of these studies have analyzed responses and achievements from students who completed voluntary internships (Klein & Weiss, 2011). Voluntary internships differ from mandatory ones in their goals, structure, assignments, and assessment. More notably, they differ in the students who participate in them.

It could be argued that only highly motivated or more impressive students choose to participate in voluntary internships and that these students would have better job success and more opportunities even without the possible benefits gained from an internship. If students who complete an internship when it is not required differ from those who do not – especially in traits related to career success – then the benefits credited to internships are biased.

The self-selection phenomenon is not new to research, but has been overlooked or unaccounted for in research related to internships. One way to evaluate whether a self-

selection bias influences the effect of internships is to study mandatory internships. Mandatory internships encompass both students who state that they would have voluntarily completed an internship and those who only completed it only because it was required.

The increasing popularity of internships requires a better understanding of them. Existing research is based almost entirely on voluntary internships, focuses overwhelmingly on the internships of Business majors, is largely anecdotal, and includes results that are not universally positive and supportive (Klein & Weiss, 2011). This study specifically examines the effects and student perceptions of mandatory internships thereby offering valuable insight and data upon which programs that currently require internships, as well as those who are considering doing so, can use to inform their decision.

Statement of the Research Problem

Internships have become a standard feature in higher education, although there is considerable variation in how they are implemented (Coco, 2000; Weible, 2009). Their implementation is considerably influenced by the theoretical framework surrounding experiential education. Structural differences aside, such framework suggests that the reason a student completes an internship could conceivably influence the benefits gained from it (Klein & Weiss, 2011). There are many reasons why students might choose to participate in an internship if they are not required to do so. They may have been advised or encouraged to do so, want to learn more, gain hands on experience, capitalize on opportunities to network, or seek to strengthen their resume. However, students who only complete an internship because it is a requirement may resent having to pay tuition for it,

making time to do it, not getting paid or getting paid very little, and/or just do the bare minimum to get by.

Highly motivated or more impressive students may be evaluated more positively by businesses who in turn, may invest more in their development (Franzen & Hecken, 2002). Consequently, students who are completing an internship primarily because it is a requirement, rather than because they have chosen to do so, might be perceived negatively by businesses that subsequently may be less likely to invest in these particular interns. Businesses could conceivably view the college or university program negatively and/or may not want to take interns in the future. These negative side effects of a mandatory internship policy would negate the intended benefits and could ultimately do more harm than good to the reputation and success of a program.

On the other hand, it is equally possible that students who complete an internship only because they are required to may not go into it with the same attitude as students electing to do one, but still reap the intended benefits and upon reflection and view the experience positively. These students might feel that had they not been required to complete an internship they would not have recognized the advantages. These students would view the policy of required internships as beneficial and recommend keeping them for other students. Currently, no research exists that compares the student perceptions of required versus mandatory internships. No one has asked students these pertinent questions: Would you have completed an internship if it had not been required? Do you think internships should be required of all students?

This qualitative and quantitative study investigates the perceptions of students in the Equine Science and Management degree program at the University of Kentucky, a

program that has implemented a mandatory internship requirement since its inception as a degree option in 2007, to learn more about the effects of a mandatory internship policy in higher education.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

Experiential learning is messy, with shape-shifting definitions and effects that can be elusive to quantify. As we are reminded with humor, “The trouble with learning from experience is that you never graduate”. An examination of experiential learning entails a thoughtful look at the history of what exactly should be the components of higher education, how the notion of experiential learning became a part of the curriculum of colleges and universities, and how internships evolved.

The history of required coursework in higher education

The history of which courses in higher education are required and which are electives is storied and complex. The same liberal education philosophies that gave birth to higher education still influence curricular decisions today, as do the changing cultures in which higher education institutions exist. Still, across centuries and cultures a liberal education has been routinely recognized, even by the current Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU), as an approach to learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. Specifically, a liberal education emphasizes broad knowledge of the wider world (science, culture, and society) in order to help students develop a sense of social responsibility and strong intellectual and practical skills that span all major fields of study (Brubacher & Rudy, 2008). Such

goals are important to consider when investigating the difference between required versus elective internships.

The role of experiential education in the college experience

‘Experiential education’ is a phrase sure to invoke a range of emotions for those in higher education. Excitement, confusion, disdain, and/or curiosity would not be unexpected in a discussion exploring experiential education and its application in degree programs. In the mid-nineteenth century, higher education in the United States began a gradual shift from formal, abstract education, where teachers presented information and students later demonstrate their knowledge, to a more experience-based approach (Cantor, 1997). Laboratory sciences, applied studies, and clinical experiences were introduced on college campuses (Lewis & Williams, 1994). By the early twentieth century, cooperative education in the form of various off-campus experiences was introduced as a complement to classroom instruction (Lewis & Williams, 1994).

During this time, John Dewey (1859 – 1952), considered by most to be the father of experiential learning, published *Experience and Education* (1938) where he offered his justification of learning by doing: “There is an intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education” (Stehno, 1986). As a progressive educator, Dewey argued that experience and social activity were essential in education and that learning did not begin with a metaphysical abstraction but instead with experience of the real world (Stehno, 1986).

Later, Kolb (1984) articulated the model most widely used today known as the “Experiential learning cycle”. In his own words he defined learning as, “. . . the process

whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb, 2014, p. 49). The cycle formulates the learner having a concrete experience, reflecting on that experience, forming abstract conceptualizations from that experience, and then testing out those realizations into a new context. Although extremely popular in the literature, Kolb’s model is hardly the only one. Many other models and definitions of experiential education have been and continue to be introduced. Perhaps the most widely recognized definition is from the Association for Experiential Education (AEE) (Roberts, 2015). It states that:

Experiential education is a philosophy that informs many methodologies in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people’s capacity to contribute to their communities (p. 23).

Numerous applications, models and definitions of experiential education have been presented over the years. Almost all of them include thoughtful facilitation mixed with considerable freedom: Freedom to explore. Freedom to make mistakes. Freedom to be flexible. Freedom to take risks. Where traditional classroom exercises and instruction can be carefully scripted and structured, experiential education always has some element of freedom whether in the exploration, reflection, conceptualization, application or the experience itself. Freedom is an important component of experiential education. But is it critical? How is experiential education impacted when the freedom to participate is forced? Specifically, do students who go on internship because they have to, still reap the benefits? That question is at the heart of this proposed study.

Internships as a component of a liberal education

Internships are one of the most common forms of experiential learning in higher education (Stehno, 1986). Because they are student-centered in nature, it stands to reason that internships are affected by the attitudes of the students who participate in them.

While it may make sense to require students to complete an internship in the context of a liberal education from a philosophical standpoint, in practice, it has not been established by careful research to be beneficial, and could even be detrimental. Edgar Dale reminds us the people remember 90% of what they experience firsthand (Dale, 1985), so a negative internship has the potential for negative consequences and feelings that linger far longer than a class students don't like. It can certainly be argued that internships fit within the recognized goals and objectives of liberal education and thus justifies them as a requirement. However, if such a requirement is based on existing research documenting the benefits of internships, very little of that research has been sampled students who were required to participate in them as opposed to those who chose to do so.

Purpose of the Study

At the core of all curricular decisions lies an intention to benefit students. While colleges and universities differ substantially with respect to their requirements and electives, assignments and assessment, content and experiences, their end goal is always the same - to produce successful students. In an age of increasing accountability, student opinions matter. Higher education is becoming increasingly focused on learning objectives and measurable outcomes and according to some, is under more public scrutiny than ever before (Altbach, Gumport, & Berdahl, 2011). Policies affecting

students are worth evaluating. Policies affecting students and the industry call for even more critical assessment.

The benefits of mandatory internships and students' perception of them is important but surprisingly, not found in existing research. The decision to require internships is influenced by many factors, but to date, little research has considered how the policy affects the experience or students' perspective of these experiences.

Extrapolations from scarce data on optional internships should be taken with a cautionary warning (Denham, 2002).

The purpose of this study is to explore how requiring internships influences the benefits of subsequent experiences and students' perspectives of the internship experience. Specifically, it aims to compare two groups of students: those that would have gone on internship even if it wasn't required and those who only completed one because they had to. The interest in this study stems from existing research documenting the benefits of internships, almost all of which is based on voluntary internships, combined with the fact that implementing the change to mandatory internships requires a considerable investment of resources and time (Gault et al., 2000; Divine et al., 2007; Thiel & Hartley, 1997; Knemeyer & Murphy, 2002; Coco, 2000; Weible, 2009; Cook et al., 2004).

Research Questions

Although my interest in internships ignites numerous questions and includes many areas of interest, this study will focus on the following four overarching and nine subsequent research questions:

1. To what extent do students who have been required to complete an internship view it as beneficial? (Why or why not)
 - 1a. How satisfied are students who have completed a mandatory internship with the experience?
 - 1b. How well did students who participated in a mandatory internship feel it prepared them for certain career skills?
 - 1c. Is there a relationship between how well students who completed a mandatory internship felt their internship prepared them at certain career skills compared to how their overall undergraduate experience prepared them at the same skills?
2. To what extent do students who have been required to complete a mandatory internship believe other students should also be required to do one? (Why or why not)
 - 2a. Is there a relationship between the primary reason a student completed their internship and whether they agreed or disagreed with the mandatory internship policy?
3. To what extent does a student's primary reason for going on internship correlate with their level of satisfaction with the experience?
 - 3a. Is there a relationship between the primary reason a student completed their internship and how beneficially they viewed it?
 - 3b. Is there a relationship between the primary reason a student completed their internship and job benefits?

3c. Is there a relationship between the primary reason a student completed their internship and how they felt it prepared them at certain career skills?

3d. Is there a relationship between the primary reason a student completed their internship and how they felt their internship prepared them at certain career skills compared to how their overall undergraduate experience prepared them at the same skills?

4. In what ways does time influence students' perception of the benefits they gained from an internship (i.e. right after they complete it, years after completing it, etc.)?

4a. Does the amount of time that has passed since completing an internship influence participant's view of the mandatory internship policy?

Procedures

Survey data was analyzed using SPSS software and interview responses, analyzed using NVivo software, were used as supportive data to further explain survey results.

Significance of Study

This proposed study will examine student perspectives on their mandatory internship experience and its perceived benefits. The study will be unique among existing research in this area in the following ways:

1. This study will be conducted on a population of students who were required to do an internship as part of their degree, unlike the overwhelming majority of existing internship research conducted on elective internships.
2. This study will gather data from the students' perspective, unlike most existing research which measures benefits through graduate data or internship supervisors.

3. This study will produce both quantitative and qualitative data, unlike existing internship related research which is largely anecdotal and relies almost entirely on quantitative studies.
4. This study will collect data from both students who have completed their internships recently and those who completed it up to 9 years ago – all within the same program, unlike the majority of studies which explore student reflection at a snapshot of time.

Applications of study

The policy of requiring internships is expensive to implement. The intent behind it is often based on the perceived importance of internships. Research is necessary, however, to support this perception. If the benefits of internships decrease or disappear altogether when they are forced, then this policy may do more harm than good. While chemistry professors may be accustomed to students not wanting to take their classes, industry professionals might not be as understanding of hosting students who are only ‘checking a box’ instead of those who are eager to learn. Such a situation might diminish the expected benefits of internships to the university, to the business, and to the student. Conversely, if students who would not have completed an internship unless they were required to do so benefit from these experiences, then the policy of requiring them is not only beneficial but should be implemented in programs that currently only offer internships as an elective.

In addition to supporting or refuting the policy of requiring internships, data from this study may reveal whether student’s perceptions of their internship experiences change over time. In this scenario, the data could be of assistance by better preparing

students for what to expect on their internship. If students don't expect to realize the advantages of a successful internship immediately they may approach the experience with a better attitude.

Finally, the data from this study could be used by other programs considering making internships a required part of their curriculum. The results could be used to initiate dialogue among faculty, administration, and advisory committees. It is very likely that the majority of people on those committees who completed internships when they were students did so voluntarily and therefore may be insensitive to or even unaware of the implications of requiring students to fulfill the same internship requirement. If universities are going to invest in mandatory internship programs the benefits have to outweigh the costs.

Summary

Colleges and universities are continually seeking new, creative, and effective ways to benefit students. Internships are often recognized as one method that influences graduate success (Hurst, Thye, & Wise, 2014). But much about their value remains unknown. Specifically, are they beneficial for students required to participate in them or only those who elect to? How can an examination of required internships contribute to the existing knowledge base of internships? Does the reason that students participate in an internship influence the benefits gained? What are students' perception of being required to complete an internship as part of their undergraduate degree requirements? Although little research exists considering a mandatory internship policy, this exploratory study aims to change that. As George R. R. Martin so aptly stated: "Perhaps that is the secret: It is not what we do, so much as why we do it."

Organization of the Study

Chapters will be organized as follows: 2) Review of Literature; 3) Methods; 4) Results; 5) Discussion.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

While internships as a form of job training predate the Middle Ages, only in the last century have they become a recognizable component of higher education curriculum. Although internships vary in their length of time, learning objectives, and method of assessment, these experiences are often credited with numerous benefits and heralded for bridging the gap between the classroom and industry. The historical perspective of the curriculum in higher education and the factors that have influenced curricular change over time provide the foundation and the impetus in this study designed to explore the implications of mandatory internships.

Since all internships, whether mandatory or elective, can trace their roots to the overarching pedagogy of experiential education, this study is also informed by the many theories and several particular models of experiential education used to shape internship practice. Finally, this study was most influenced by a thorough review of internship related research. While there are many perceived advantages for students, employers, and universities who participate in internships, several drawbacks also exist. One cannot examine a policy of mandatory internships without considering both the positives and negatives. Ultimately, this study, which is based on students' perspectives, is an evaluation of the curricular decision to move internships from elective to required, with the intent to add to and develop the empirical body of research connected to internships.

Required Courses in Higher Education

At the heart of this study is the desire to learn more about the implications of requiring internships. Such research would be incomplete without an understanding of the

history of required courses in higher education. How curricular decisions are made, who makes them, and what influences them is necessary to contextualize their effects.

Students may live in the here and now but researchers are not afforded the same luxury.

A comprehensive understanding of the history that resulted in the way things are today is needed to have any hope of shaping where they are going.

Historical context of the higher education curriculum

How did the liberal arts come to be essential for an educated person?

Many people refer to (or criticize) an education that is based on the liberal arts without understanding what exactly a liberal arts education is or what makes it different from the focus of other degrees. Though the concept of a liberal education has evolved slightly, it has weathered many storms and remains relatively intact. Aristotle, a fourth century philosopher, may not have been the first person to contemplate education, but his ideas have stood the test of time. Aristotle believed that freedom was one of the ultimate goals of education and that happiness would be impossible without freedom (Hummel, 1993). He argued that true freedom came through an education that was devoid of any constraints. This belief was largely responsible for the initial association between a liberal education and freedom. According to Aristotle, anything that would prevent the pursuit of education based on knowledge for its own sake, was illiberal (Curren, 2000). Thus the pursuit of an education primarily as a means to an end (e.g., to get a job) was not a liberal education. Aristotle was far from alone in his belief that a liberal education, as marked by the absence of limitation or constrain, and the freedom of pursuit, was the most pure and ideal form of education (Curren, 2000).

The Greeks also believed a 'liberal' education should be liberating and therefore involve the freedom to study within the overarching goal of freedom through understanding (Blanshard, Ducasse, Hendel, Murphy, & Otto, 1945). The Chinese defined liberal learning as an education that served the "whole person" (Nussbaum, 1998). John Dewey perhaps described it best when he defined what a liberal education would yield:

" . . . a hospitality of mind, generous imagination, trained capacity of discrimination, freedom from class, sectarian or partisan prejudice and passion, faith without fanaticism." (Dewey, Boydston, & Ross, 1983, p. 201).

Across centuries and cultures a liberal education has been routinely recognized, even by the current Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU), as an approach to learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. Specifically, a liberal education is one that emphasizes broad knowledge of the wider world (science, culture, and society) in order to help students develop a sense of social responsibility and strong intellectual and practical skills that span all major fields of study (Brubacher & Rudy, 2008).

A liberal education refers to the combination of philosophical and rhetorical traditions of how one learns as a whole person. This particular combination is intended to teach students to learn how to learn and to continue both inquiry and cultural participation throughout their lives. The intent still echoes Aristotle's belief that learning equals freedom.

The roots of contemporary higher education

Early philosophers weren't the only ones who recognized the importance of education. For centuries, only a small percentage of the world's population could read or write, so centers of education were developed to teach literacy (Goodchild & Wechsler, 1997). With time, the focus of these learning communities evolved in a manner that reflected the particular goals of whoever developed them. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, three major religions, all recognized the importance of training an educated clergy and consequently developed higher education institutions focused on teaching the languages of the Bible and the Quran: Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic (Goodchild & Wechsler, 1997). From the Christian monasteries in Western Europe to the madrasas in the Islamic world, religion and higher education have been so intrinsically entwined that one cannot possibly study the history of one without acknowledging the history of the other (Brubacher & Rudy, 2008).

Eventually, through the Renaissance and the Age of Discovery, the dominant religious powers lost their monopoly on higher education and secular higher education institutions, known as universities, began to emerge (Altbach, et al., 2011). Curriculum in these early universities, while not entirely devoid of a religious emphasis, was very much influenced by the surrounding culture. In the Greek culture, the goal of a good education was to produce a well-rounded citizen so their higher education curriculum included science, philosophy, music, dancing, and gymnastics (Lord, 1982). The Roman culture also valued good citizens but their definition of a good citizen was one who was also an effective speaker so the curriculum in their higher education institutions included intensive study of literature and oratory (Lord, 1982). Emerging was a philosophy of

liberal education that formed the initial medieval curricular model and included the seven original liberal arts: grammar, rhetoric, logic, astronomy, arithmetic, geometry, and music (Denham, 2002).

From the very beginning, the gatekeepers of higher education, those who designed curriculum, were mindful of the culture in which they evolved. The philosophers who valued learning for the sake of learning created places to study the liberal arts. The cultures who valued well-rounded citizens developed curriculum aimed at producing them. The churches who valued highly educated clergy established places to train them. Those were the initial gatekeepers: The philosophers, the rulers, and the church. Remaining a constant has been the impossibility of separating what is taught at sites of higher learning from the culture in which those institutions were and are housed.

Early higher education in the United States

The college curriculum that was imported to the United States from 17th century England was a fusion of the Reformation and the Renaissance. Colleges were established as places for educating the clergy, gentlemen, and scholars who would in turn govern the colonies (Rudolph, 1962). Early bachelor degrees were composed of a curriculum that was rigidly prescribed for all students. Neither a variety of interests nor the professional plans of students were taken into account (Koos & Crawford, 1922). In fact, in most early colonial colleges, almost all of the curriculum was taught by the president of the college (Kraus, 1961). The liberal arts consisted of a fixed body of knowledge passed down from the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation and constituted an absolute and immutable truth that was to be absorbed – not criticized or questioned – by every student (Fischer, 1866). The curriculum from the original English-American colleges to modern

times has always been influenced by different elements of society. The church, the government, industry, and student interest have exercised varying degrees of control and made subsequent demands. Typically, the major changes in curriculum have been brought about by forces outside of the institutions themselves.

Influences on higher education curriculum in the United States

Influence of the Church

Early English-Americans wanted to maintain many aspects of the Old World civilization (Cutts, 1935) and higher education was the most effective tool for the transmission and preservation of intellectual culture (Brubacher & Rudy, 2008). Initially, the primary reason for founding colonial colleges was the desire of important religious denominations for a literate, college-trained clergy. Early colleges were not just established to train ministers, their charters made it clear that they intended to educate men for other professions and to serve as public officials (Brubacher & Rudy, 2008). Universities were intended as both theological seminaries and schools for developing the higher culture of laymen. Christian thought was central to forming the nine pre-Revolutionary colleges. Not surprisingly, the majority of early English-American college faculty were men of the clergy (Brubacher & Rudy, 2008).

Higher education has not always been a governmental priority and responsibility in the United States. Eighteenth century European traditions put the burden of education on the church and the family, not the government. The exact nature of instruction depended on the beliefs of a particular denomination. Reading the Bible for oneself was a basic literacy requirement of Protestants. New England colonies chose to use tax dollars to pay for schooling since in addition to reading the Bible, school was seen as a place to

advance political ideals and theories. Literacy was key to acquiring information and thoughtful consideration of information was basic requirement of membership in the community.

The separation of church and state

The first change to impact the higher education curriculum in early American colleges was the philosophy of a separation of church and state. As religious diversity grew in America, theological debates resulted in an education that avoided religious bias in the classroom (Lucas, 1994). Many who founded colleges after 1750, mostly prominent laymen instead of clergymen, started secular schools that encouraged inquiry and independent thinking and established popular classes such as mechanics. With time, far fewer graduates went into the ministry and the importance of a religious foundation in the university curriculum declined (Thwing, 1906). The governing of institutions of higher education and thus curricular development remained hierarchical in nature. When a college was founded, those in charge hired faculty based on the goals of a particular school. The new faculty subsequently designed the curriculum, with the assistance of governing boards and learned societies (Brubacher & Rudy, 2008).

Introduction of electives

At first, topics that did not fit into the ordinary curriculum were often covered in weekly “extracurricular” lectures given to the entire student body (Altbach, et al., 2011; Bastedo, 2005). As students became interested in new knowledge, more extensive efforts were made, both formally and informally, to incorporate modern material into an existing curriculum (Clark, 1987). For example, the influence of the Scientific Revolution in Europe precipitated the addition of science classes to the regular liberal arts curriculum at

universities in the United States. American faculty returned from Europe excited to teach these new daring subjects to students who were equally eager to learn them. As a result, new courses in physics, anatomy, chemistry, and more advanced mathematics were gradually added to the final two years of college coursework (Clark, 1987). After time, even more new topics emerged at a rapid pace and many faculty and administrators advocated allowing students to select courses of their choosing. While this change in curriculum started small, by the turn of the nineteenth century, the American college curriculum was in a state of conflict with regards to the reconciliation of the knowledge and skills necessary for a liberal education with interests and needs of a contemporary society (Bastedo, 2005).

Since students were no longer attending higher education institutions simply to join the clergy or become doctors, lawyers, or statesmen, their interests changed. As the career goals of students broadened, society began to expect higher education to cover an increasing number of subjects. The traditional curriculum came under attack from progressives for its intense focus on irrelevant ancient languages and theology (Roth, 2014). The result of this unplanned growth was a curriculum that lacked an overarching philosophy and was criticized for being chaotic and confusing (Grant & Riesman, 1978). At the same time, the gradual rise in the average age and thus perceived maturity of college students during the nineteenth century also made the idea of an elective curriculum attractive (Clark, 1987). Places such as Harvard and Thomas Jefferson's University of Virginia began to reform traditional college curricula, much to the concern of those who questioned such changes (Roth, 2014). Many faculty and administrators opposed a deviation from the customary liberal arts-based education for reasons both

traditional and contemporary in nature (Bastedo, 2005). At the height of this debate, the Yale Report of 1828 was penned to both explain and defend the classical curriculum (Urofsky, 1965).

Influence of government funding

Another important influence on the evolving higher education curriculum was the introduction of government funding. Initially, all colleges were funded by the church or private individuals and boards. But the Land Ordinance of 1785 gave federal land grants to improve primary schooling and became the first mechanism to publicly fund education in the United States (Brubacher & Rudy, 2008). Because federal aid to schools was seen as an important method of enhancing American life, public institutions with public lands would receive funding from the Land Ordinance of 1785. The intention was to train young men as civil servants for a new republic (Kerr, 2005).

The Land Ordinance of 1785 eventually gave rise to the Morrill Act of 1862 and the development of land-grant colleges, the first institutions in the United States to add applied science and the mechanical arts to a previously exclusive liberal arts curriculum. The purpose in doing so was simple: to help public institutions achieve specific goals desired by the federal government (Brubacher & Rudy, 2008). The support for this energetic combination of practical and liberal education can be found in the words of President Welch of the Iowa State Agricultural College when he declared "... knowledge should be taught for its uses; . . . culture is an incidental result" (Edwards, 1872). The Morrill Act of 1862 set the course for universities to better prepare individuals for the "egalitarianism of the common man" (Kerr, 2005).

Eventually, the Morrill Act of 1890 would encourage African Americans to pursue postsecondary education across the United States (Conrad & Weerts, 2004). In the next century, the federal government supported research during World War II that would intensify the cooperation between state government and public higher education (Gladieux, King, & Corrigan, 2005). The GI Bill that followed World War II changed the face of the student body permanently and a college education became a dream that could be realized by more and more Americans.

Changing demographics of the student body

As the student body changed to reflect the dynamic demographics of America, new voices asked to be recognized in the development of curriculum. With the addition of women and minorities as students, the traditional curriculum that centered around the beliefs and knowledge generated by “dead white men” was deemed inadequate. The study of literature was and remains a lynchpin of a liberal arts curriculum and schools of literary criticism challenged not only what should be read by college students, but how text should be interpreted. For example, Reader-response theory insisted that ideas could be interpreted and therefore the individual had an essential role in learning; there was not one right meaning to be unearthed by the student. An individual brought his or her own life experiences and beliefs to the page. The emphasis in meaning shifted from the text to the reader (Rosenblatt, 1978). Likewise, the importance of the student in the learning environment was paramount.

The addition of Women’s Studies, Black Studies, and Native American Studies, for example, added both depth and breadth to the liberal arts curriculum. Whereas a college education was once the property of the wealthy, funding for an education through

grants and loans opened the doors of colleges and universities to students for whom such a possibility was unthinkable even a generation ago. Each unique group of students wanted to study its history, its contributions to the world, its ways of thinking and believing. Issues of gender, race, and poverty were woven into the fabric of a liberal arts education. Non-traditional students were now attending colleges in record numbers and the students in their early twenties were accompanied in classes by students far their senior who brought a myriad of life experiences and challenges to the classroom.

Influence of politicians

The influence of politicians on the curriculum of higher education began early on and has remained a constant source of opinions, criticism, and frequently, unasked for advice. Some of the first politicians to criticize established academic curriculum included Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Benjamin Franklin. These revolutionary stalwarts were still convinced of the value of the classics, but Jefferson wished to combine classical curriculum with modern subjects, e.g., history, government, science, and modern languages while Franklin proposed a parallel curriculum for those whom he decided would not profit from studying Latin and Greek (Brubacher & Rudy, 2008). Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence and third president of the United States, had a profound impact on American higher education. He saw education as the key to preparing citizens for a democracy and as an important weapon in fighting the abuses of wealth and privilege (Roth, 2014). Jefferson argued that the health of a republic depended on the education of its citizens and believed the accumulation of knowledge would improve public and private life (Roth, 2014).

Jefferson founded the University of Virginia with the goal of not prescribing a course of study to direct graduates to the “particular vocations to which they are destined.” He believed that informed citizens made involved citizens. Jefferson supported a liberal education with the intention of developing the whole person and made learning a fundamental part of the individual (Brubacher & Rudy, 2008). He also championed publicly funded higher education (Lucas, 2006). Jefferson decided what would be taught at the University of Virginia and included history, literature, and philosophy, but also focused on science and math (Roth, 2014). While Harvard and other universities held all students to one prescribed course of reading, Jefferson encouraged an uncontrolled choice of which courses students would attend (Lucas, 2006). Above all, he wanted students to make discoveries for themselves, not be told what to study based on a future that had already been decided by families, teachers, churches, or the government (Brubacher & Rudy, 2008).

Armed with an understanding of the original intention of a liberal arts education, how we arrived at the core curriculum in higher education in the United States today, and the many factors, both internal and external, that have influenced curricular changes along the way, we are ready to consider the current lines of thought surrounding college curriculum today.

College curriculum in the modern era

Issues facing general education requirements

Arguments related to the inclusion of a core curriculum (often referred to as general education) requirements in higher education are presented by three main schools of thought: First, higher education should be completely vocationally focused with

curriculum geared towards teaching marketable job skills and virtually not general education requirements; Second, a liberal arts based general-education curriculum should be required of every graduate; and finally, some hybrid between the two, where general-education requirements were included by tailored to student's career interests, would be best. There are several factors driving these conflicting viewpoints, but it is important to distinguish who holds which viewpoints and why.

The many perspectives related to higher education curriculum are in direct proportion to the many different sources that are financially invested in and thus feel entitled to assess the end product of a degree. Higher education degrees, and more specifically four-year liberal arts degrees at public institutions, are currently subsidized by both state and federal governments, taxpayers, parents, students, private lenders, and donors. With so many contributors footing the bill it begs the question, who evaluates the finished product? Is what the government wants for its money different than what students want for theirs? What about the expectations of parents or taxpayers whose contributions are not necessarily made by choice? Where does a particular industry fit into all of this? Businesses may not be contributing financially to the costs of college but they represent the future employers of graduates. In addition, private donors, administrators, faculties, politicians, learned societies, and accrediting bodies, groups who are not be directly paying the cost of a college education either, still insist on having a strong influence on curriculum.

Curriculum must be designed related to its intended purpose. With different people attributing different purposes to four-year degrees, appropriate curriculum is difficult to develop and even harder to evaluate. What is required and what is elective

will look vastly different depending on whether an institution is vocationally or liberal arts focused. If the purpose of higher education is to develop educated citizens it will require different courses to accomplish this feat than if its purpose is to teach skills for a particular job.

Challenges to the liberal arts core curricula

Some argue that required liberal arts core courses are neither necessary nor relevant and that today's bachelor's degrees should be entirely vocational in nature. These arguments are not new. From the early colonial days when Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Ralph Waldo Emerson held liberal arts education in high esteem while others such as Benjamin Franklin, argued that America's elite colleges only produced pride and conceit and instead promoted apprenticeships and self-taught success, there have been debates over the necessity and relevance of higher education (Roth, 2014). These opposing viewpoints have not gone away, nor have they weakened. According to the Institution for College Access and Success, the value of college degrees with relation to earning power is declining (Fry, 2015). With student debt at an all-time high of \$1.2 trillion, some question whether students are paying for degrees that are decreasingly valuable and are too frequently forced to attend classes they may not want or think they need (Fry, 2015). Although this belief is heard most frequently from students, parents, and industry, it is currently gaining popularity with politicians. Overlooked in this worthwhile debate is the unwillingness or inability of most states to provide financial support for students (Roth, 2014).

Conversely, many employers complain that recent bachelor's degree graduates are "underprepared" and lack experience related to jobs or careers, even though there exists

little evidence to support that graduates from previous generations were somehow better able to join the work force (Selingo, 2016). The Association of Human Resource Officers recently noted that “Many employers are reluctant to hire recent college graduates because so many fail at their first, second, and even third jobs” (Parilla & Ross, 2016, p. 1). Employers today want graduates pre-trained for a job and most students want to be pre-trained for jobs (Selingo, 2016). An annual survey conducted at the University of California at Los Angeles provides factual support for this job-oriented focus in higher education. Today, current freshmen list getting a better job as the most important reason for going to college. Ten years ago the most frequently given reason for getting a college degree was to learn about things that were interesting (Selingo, 2016). The increasing pressure for higher education to develop career-related skills perhaps explains, but definitely supports, the increasing popularity of internships offered at colleges and universities (Coco, 2000).

Internships and the college curriculum

Internships have been hailed by those in both higher education and industry as a means of bridging the gap between careers and the classroom (Andrews & Higson, 2008). They satisfy calls for more vocational training and meet demand for developing career specific skills. In fact even the age old debate regarding the purpose of higher education, whether it is as a means of training students for careers or making them informed citizens, could find common ground in internships. The decision to require them, therefore, is important.

Now, as in the past, numerous external factors influence which college courses are required and which are elective. The economy, industry stakeholders, students,

administrators, and politicians are all involved in driving curricular changes.

Unfortunately, the opinions of those outside the university are based primarily on personal experience. In fact, much like the research surrounding internships, the perspectives of external stakeholders as they relate to curriculum, and more specifically internships, are often anecdotal in nature rather than data based. Given the benefits universities, students, and industries stand to gain from internships combined with the considerable resources they may require, data regarding the policy of mandatory internships could play an important role in helping inform these types of curricular decisions.

History of Internships

Internships are not a modern idea. In fact, one of the earliest references to internships can be found in Hammurabi's Code in 1754 BC where the appropriateness of "bringing a boy into the home of a craftsman" was declared as the "natural way to learn a craft" (Aristotle, 1941; Hamilton, 2010). Similarly, early Greek, Roman, and Chinese writings suggest that the use of internships to prepare youth for entry into various skilled labor fields was widespread, even becoming formalized among developing societies as early as 600 BC (Aldrich, 1999).

Many of the current approaches to internships can be traced back to the Middle Ages. At that time, they were referred to as 'apprenticeships' and consisted of structured work experiences controlled by guilds, associations of craftsmen who banded together to promote the mutual interests shared by others engaged in the same trades (Gospel & Fuller, 1998). In medieval times, those interested in a line of work became apprentices who spent several years being initiated into the theory and practice of a particular

occupation (Aldrich, 1999). Significant experiential learning initiatives are still commonplace in medical and teaching fields.

The idea that students are socialized to a career through observation and experience is not new (Nespor, 1987). In the early 1900s, social scientist began studying a number of occupational groups including accountancy, life insurance, hiring managers, and medicine for their professionalization process (Wynia, Kurlander, & Morse, 2007; Sox, 2007). Professional socialization has since been defined as the “process by which people selectively acquire the values and attitudes, the interests, skills and knowledge—in short, the culture—current in the groups of which they are, or seek to become a member” and studied extensively in medically related careers (Merton, Reeder, & Kendall, 1957).

Studies have shown that students learn how to act professionally as an implicit not explicit part of their medical school curriculum (Levinson, Ginsburgh, Hafferty, & Lucey, 2014; Coombs, 1978). Likewise, in education it has been demonstrated that future teachers’ practices were more heavily influenced by their experiences in classrooms than their formal training and that teachers internalize modes of practice while serving an apprenticeship of observation as students (Nespor, 1987; Lortie, 1975). Although professional socialization and apprenticeships are not new, the transition from early work-learning experiences to internships as we know them today was complicated.

The changing nature of internships in early America

Early approaches to internships in the United States were influenced by its British heritage. Even Benjamin Franklin spent time as an apprentice in a printer’s shop (Gospel & Fuller, 1998). Initially, internships were modified to meet the needs and conditions of

the colonies, but in keeping with British tradition, early colonial governments set the laws and conditions of internships (Sutliff, 1995). Officials were given the responsibility of managing the agreements between masters (as they were referred to in those days) and apprentices. This external governing approach continued well into the nineteenth century (Sutliff, 1995).

Eventually, however, the internship model where agreements were governed by officials began to fail; several factors contributed to this decline including the lack of organization, supervision, sufficient administration, or any classroom instruction (Sutliff, 1995). These early American internships focused on manual skills but their lack of an educational component prevented them from meeting the dynamic needs for the technical knowledge and skills brought on by the Industrial Revolution (Sutliff, 1995). More significantly, the colonial approach to internships did not provide the knowledge or thinking skills necessary in ever-evolving industries. It has also been theorized that a reliance on internships in America failed as a result of the democratic ideology that valued traditional education over internships. It was agreed that a formal education was necessary for a democratic society to succeed (Hamilton, 2010).

The reemerging of internships as they currently exist was the result of rethinking of their purpose, design, and implementation (Hamilton, 2010). Where classical internships (such as those characterized by the medieval guild experiences) involved a required a predetermined period of time to learn a trade, learning through observation and hands-on practice, and specialized training in a single trade, modern internships involve training to the standards of a particular occupation, formalized, supervised training, and hands on experience combined with college coursework.

A renewed interest in internships can be credited to many things, including the role of government. European and American governments have been particularly focused on strengthening the skill set of their work forces in recent decades (Fennel, 1994). Twenty-first century global economies are constantly changing and thereby influencing which jobs will be essential and what skills will be necessary for the work force. Because many of these new vocations are innovative and dynamic, simply working in them for a set period of time is no longer sufficient.

The debate that began in the early 1900's concluded with an admission that both on-the-job training and formal education were necessary to prepare students for the demands of a dynamic job market. Internships offer a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between academic theory and practical application. The precepts of experiential learning provide the foundation upon which decisions regarding internships and their particular design should be based.

Experiential Education

Internships exist within the overarching framework of experiential education. They apply its philosophical roots, test its theories, and practice its models. Experiential education is a topic ripe with a storied history, numerous contributors, different interpretations, and both firm resistance and increasing popularity - all at the same time. Defining experiential education is more complicated than it first appears. A methodological definition oversimplifies it. But getting bogged down in the details of the concept runs the risk of becoming so convoluted that any pedagogical implications are lost. Even John Dewey, considered by many to be the most influential philosopher on the topic of experiential learning, struggled defining experiential learning, evident in papers

written later in his career in which he wrote: “I would abandon the term “experience” because of my growing realization that the historical obstacles which prevent understanding...are, for all practical purposes, insurmountable” (Dewey, Boydston, & Edel, 2008, p. 361).

One commonly used definition of experiential education, and the one driving this study, was crafted by the Association for Experiential Education (AEE) (Roberts, 2015):

Experiential education is a philosophy that informs many methodologies in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people’s capacity to contribute to their communities (p. 23).

Categorizing experiential education

One can divide the many different examples of experiential learning into four overarching categories: Active learning, community-based learning, integrative learning, and problem or project-based learning. These categories offer an organizational structure within the philosophical framework of experiential learning while allowing for necessary overlap.

1. *Active learning.* Active learning includes instructional strategies aimed at increasing students’ involvement and ownership of their learning.

Originally, this form of experiential education appeared in literature as a way for teachers to “liven up” more passive forms of teaching (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). It includes a wide range of pedagogies from role playing to lab work to collaborative based learning (Bowen, 2012). These methods

have been shown to improve retention and develop critical thinking (Bowen, 2012).

Active learning is often used in higher education to support use of technology and ‘flipped’ classrooms: it can be employed as a technique or method in a variety of classroom contexts such as labs. While it is almost always present as part of the broader process of experiential education and is congruent with the philosophy of engagement, the broader processes of experiential education such as framing and reflection are not always present in active learning.

2. *Community-based learning.* Community-based learning has been around since the Progressive Era when educators sought to connect school with real world settings. (Daloiz, Keen, Keen, & Parks, 1996: Freire, 1970). Community-based learning involves some kind of activity (research project, internships, fieldwork, volunteering) that occurs in the community (Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton, 2009). Thus by definition, community-based learning takes place off campus while other types of experiential education such as active learning, may not. Mere activity in the community might constitute community-based learning, which often employs direct experience and focused reflection of experiential education, but not all community-based learning has all of the components of experiential education.
3. *Integrative learning.* Integrative learning comes in many forms, such as, connecting skills and knowledge from multiple sources and experiences,

applying theory to practice in a variety of settings, utilizing diverse and even contradictory points of view, and/or understanding issues and positions contextually. This type of learning rarely involves the type of hands-on experience often referred in experiential education literature but it shares the same framework of active engagement and application of the broader definition of experiential education. Examples of integrative learning include capstone classes and interdisciplinary, team-taught courses. Again, not all integrative learning necessarily contains every component of experiential education, but its intent and design aligns with the philosophy of experiential education.

4. *Problem and project-based learning.* Problem and project-based learning (also known as inquiry-based or discovery-based learning) involve complex, real-world problems that are used to motivate students to identify and research concepts and principles they need to know to work through problems. Examples of problem based learning include giving students current events or common industry problems and having them formulate solutions. Similar to integrative learning, problem and project-based learning might lack certain elements of experiential education, such as reflection or concrete experience, but its purpose and philosophy align with experiential education.

History of experiential education

The contributions of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle to the philosophies of experiential learning are well documented and notably distinct (Allison & Wurdinger,

2007; Crosby, 1995; Hunt, 1990). Each philosopher offered different facets of the experiential learning theory as we know it today. Socrates contributed the *elenctic* (also known as *elenchus*) method which was a meaningful way of asking questions whereby the teacher facilitated learning by assessing where the student was and prompting the student's own discovery, a method of teaching not surprisingly called 'the Socratic method' (Long, 2002). Following the theories of Socrates, the role of the educator in facilitating learning is of singular importance.

Plato's primary contribution to experiential learning was to introduce the theory of holistic education since he purported that there were two branches of education – one philosophical and one physical – and together they formed the perfect harmony of education (Laertius, 1979). Later on, Aristotle introduced the idea that all of education was a cyclic matter of reflection and experience (Dewey, 1986).

Although there is a long list of contributors, William James (1841-1910) was one of the first to describe an educational process that separated concrete experience from conceptual interpretation (Smith & Knapp, 2011). In his words he concluded that, "Our experience isn't just a stream of data, but a complex process that's full of meaning." (Smith & Knapp, 2011, p.27) James argued that experience was composed of both content and a reference for new content (similar to the scaffolding theory later introduced by Vygotsky) and that it could not be reduced to pure sensation but instead required particulars and relations between those particulars (Wurdinger, 2005).

Later, Jean Piaget (1896 – 1980), who's research primarily focused on children, was a major contributor in the lineup of founders of experiential learning who proposed that human development occurred in distinct, increasingly sophisticated stages of

thinking (Kolb & Kolb, 1999). Piaget suggested that interaction with the environment stimulated cognition and intellectual growth. People were uncomfortable in a state of cognitive confusion or disequilibrium, and “worked” to actively make sense of a novel experience (Kolb & Kolb, 1999). A child learning the difference between dogs and cats, for example, would successfully sort out vague information with little helpful input from anyone else in order to make the distinction between Fido, the dog, and Fluffy, the cat. Piaget identified stages of cognitive development that were driven by tension between previous information acquired and a unique circumstance. Through processes of assimilation, where new information is added to existing categories (this is another kind of dog), and accommodation, where a new category is developed (this is a stuffed animal), existing cognitive structures would add new information (Kolb, 2014).

Following Piaget and building on his theories of cognitive development, Lee Vygotsky (1896 – 1934) introduced the theories of scaffolding and of social constructivism of learning, the former which described how new experiences are processed and the latter which highlighted the importance of a mentor in facilitating the learning process. Unlike Piaget, Vygotsky valued the importance of other people in the learning environment (Kolb & Kolb, 1999). For example, he believed that parents or caregivers could help children make sense of information that had put them in a state of cognitive dissonance, an uncomfortable place for anyone. A child learns to tie his shoes much quicker with guidance from a shoe-tying mentor than does a child merely handed a pair of shoes with untied shoe strings. However, a mentor doesn’t necessarily have to be an older person; adults who struggle with technology are able to achieve relative competence with the help of a sixteen-year-old.

Experiential education in higher education

In the mid-nineteenth century, higher education in the United States began a gradual shift from formal, abstract education, where teachers presented information and students later demonstrate their knowledge, to more experience-based approaches (Cantor, 1997). Laboratory sciences, applied studies, and clinical experiences were introduced on college campuses (Lewis & Williams, 1994). By the early twentieth century, cooperative education in the form of various off-campus experiences, was introduced as a complement to classroom instruction (Lewis & Williams, 1984).

During this time, John Dewey (1859 – 1952), considered by most to be the father of experiential learning, published *Experience and Education* (1938) where he offered his justification of learning by doing: “There is an intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education” (Dewey, 1986). As a progressive educator, Dewey argued that experience and social activity were essential in education and that learning did not begin with a metaphysical abstraction but instead with experience of the real world (Stehno, 1986).

The idea of cooperative education was an early precursor to modern applications of experiential education in higher education and has its roots in the early part of the twentieth century. The first documented cooperative education program was introduced at the University of Cincinnati in 1906 when an intrepid educator, Herman Schneider, wanted to build a bridge between “Education’s ivory tower and industry’s smokestack.” Such an idea was originally ridiculed by his contemporaries (Reilly, 2005). But what Schneider observed -- and also verified by analyzing graduates' records -- was that the students who understood classroom concepts quickest and best had either worked while

attending college or during summer breaks. Based on this information, he sent 27 novice engineering students into mills and mines in paid positions that he had arranged in order for them to see what lessons they would learn (Reilly, 2005).

Positive reviews of UC's experimental co-op program convinced the Board of Trustees to continue it. Four hundred students applied for the 70 spots available in 1907, and by 1919, nearly 800 co-ops were working in 135 local companies (Neihaus, n.d.). In the end, the University of Cincinnati replaced its traditional engineering program in 1920 with a cooperative program that became mandatory for all engineering and business students (Neihaus, n.d.).

Around the country, other universities began to build programs modeled on Schneider's "Cincinnati Plan." Northeastern University in Boston, was the first (1909), followed by the University of Pittsburgh (1910), the University of Detroit (1911) and the Georgia Institute of Technology and Rochester Institute of Technology (1912). Even Harvard joined the fold in 1920, with former UC Co-op Director Charles Lytle guiding the new program (Reilly, 2005).

Field-based experiential learning came next. Beginning in the 1930s, colleges and universities started implementing internships and practicum assignments to help prepare students in medicine, psychology, education, and social work (Raelin, 2000). For example, today, accrediting bodies for schools of education (the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) and the International Literacy Association (ILA)) require a series of structured, supervised field placements with increasing responsibilities on the part of the student as a focal point of teacher preparation.

Finally, Kolb (1984) articulated the model most widely used today known as the “Experiential learning cycle”. In his own words he defined learning as, “The process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb, 2014, p. 49). The cycle (detailed in the next section) formulates the learner having a concrete experience, reflecting on that experience, forming abstract conceptualizations from that experience, and then testing out those realizations into a new context. This model, though extremely popular in experiential education literature, is not the only one given attention.

Models of experiential learning

An understanding of the history, theoretical framework, and contributing philosophers are all important when discussing experiential education, but when actually researching it, the specific pedagogies and established models are paramount. For this study the internships were considered based on Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle with the addition of a *focus* stage from Joplin’s Action-Reflection Cycle.

Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle

Experiential learning is a singularly powerful approach to teaching and learning that is based on the fact that people learn best through experience.

David Kolb, 2014

In 1978, Kolb suggested that experiential learning was receiving renewed interest for a number of reasons, namely a significant increase in adult career changes and adult learners and a subsequent increase in the demand for vocational courses (Bergsteiner, Avery, & Neumann, 2010). Similar to Dewey’s unending cycle, Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle (sometimes confused with Kolb’s Learning Cycle) depicted a core learning cycle through which all learners progress time and time again (Kolb, 1984).

Kolb's cycle consists of four distinct learning phases: *concrete experience*, *reflective observation*, *abstract conceptualization*, and *active experimentation*.

Kolb's theory is that learning is a cognitive process involving constant adaption to and engagement with one's environment (Bergstein et al., 2010). In these phases the learner gains experience from a concrete activity, reflects on that experience to form generalizations and conceptualize knowledge, and finally tests the implications of his or her conceptualization through new experiences (Askeland, 2003; Kolb & Kolb, 2009,). While there may be overlap between stages, there exists a distinct beginning and ending of this cycle.

Although currently a commonly referenced in experiential education literature, Kolb's model is not without its critics. Detractors point out the muddled topology of what constitutes concrete and abstract learning, insufficient attention to cultural variations in the learning process, the etiology and ontology of knowledge, and the confusion between whether the model displays styles of learning or stages of learning in a cyclical model (Bergseiner et al., 2010; Smith & Knapp, 2011). Many variations have also been adapted from this popular model. Arguably, the most influential adaptation has been the addition of a fifth stage often referred to as "framing" "focus" or "pre-exposure" which occurs prior to concrete experience (Jensen, 2005; Joplin, 2008).

Joplin's Action-Reflection cycle

In 1981, Joplin introduced an experiential learning model similar to Dewey's but based on Kolb's. Joplin's proposed model consisted of five stages which represented "complete learning" (Joplin, 1981). Five stages were identified; *focus*, *action*, *support*, *feedback*, and *debrief*.

Although Joplin's stages have different names and there is an additional stage (focus) the description of each stage closely mirrors those in Kolb's model, from which it was adapted. The first stage of this cycle, which consists of presenting a task and isolating the attention of the learner, or concentration, is *focus*. According to Joplin, a good focus stage is specific enough to orient the student/participant, but not too specific as to rule out unplanned learning (Joplin, 1981). The next stage of this model is *action*, which in the diagram is represented as the hurricane like stage of the model. This stage places the learner in a stressful situation to confront a problem; such as an unfamiliar environment requiring new skills or new knowledge. In Joplin's stage the greatest responsibility is on the learner.

The premise of Joplin's model is based in part on the Hart's work in The New 'Brain' Concept of Learning (Hart, 1978). Hart demonstrates through collective research that the brain is innately active in that it is "on" when actively choosing, processing, ordering, making decisions, etc., but the brain is not "on" when someone is attempting to pour information into it. Based on this, Joplin, suggests that in the action proponent of experiential learning activities it is mandatory that the learner be given responsibility.

The next stage of Joplin's model is *support*. In her view, support provides the learner with security in a caring manner that encourages learners to continue to challenge themselves and experiment. People can provide support by demonstrating interest in the learner's situation and offering help as he or she progresses through it. According to Joplin, support can be either subtle or obvious. Support is also closely linked with the next stage in Joplin's model, which is *feedback*. The feedback stage is necessary to ensure that the learner has the adequate information to progress. Feedback can be given

through facilitation in either the verbal or written form and in Joplin's experience the more specific this feedback is, the better.

The final stage of Joplin's experiential learning model is *debrief*. It is in the debrief stage that Joplin argues learning is recognized, articulated, and evaluated (Joplin, 1981). The debrief stage includes the sorting and organizing of information as well as personal perception and reflection all of which helps the student learn from the experience. Joplin argues that in experiential learning the debrief stage may occur within the individual but with for experiential education it must be public.

This study was designed to gain a better understanding of the implications of *requiring*, rather than merely *offering*, an internship as part of an academic curriculum. To that extent, a broad understanding of the history and theories behind experiential education and some of the models used to formulate its practice provide the support for a discussion on internships in higher education.

Internships

Benefits of internships

The value, both perceived and real, of internships to students, the industry, and colleges and universities has fueled their increased popularity over the last thirty years (Coco, 2000). In 1980, only 1 of 36 graduates had completed an internship while in college but by 2000 that number had increased to 3 out of 4 graduates (Coco, 2000).

Other studies have reported that somewhere between 90-95% of colleges offer some type of internship for-credit experience (Cook et al., 2004; Weible, 2009). Internship-related research has explored internships as they relate to all three stakeholders: students, industry, and colleges and universities.

Benefits to students

The benefits of internships from the student perspective are wide-ranging. Early studies in the field suggest that internships provide a valuable academic experience, lead to a greater sense of responsibility, and increase personal and social efficacy (Hite & Bellizi, 1986; Bernstein, 1976; Eyler, 1993; Hursh & Borzak, 1979).

The primary benefits of internships for students are career related. Students who participate in internships credit the experience with clarifying their career goals and better preparing them for their desired careers (Perez, 2001; Gault et al., 2010). Other studies have shown that internships strengthen job-related components that include improved skills with interviewing, the establishment of networks for work that are perceived to be beneficial, and gaining experiences that strengthen a resume (Divine et al., 2007; Gault et al., 2010; Coco, 2000; Knemeyer & Murphy, 2002). The aforementioned benefits extend past graduation, enhancing the value of internships for students.

Graduates who participate in an internship receive more job offers and were offered jobs more quickly after graduating than those who did not (Coco, 2000; Divine et al., 2007; Taylor, 1988; Thiel & Hartley, 1997). In some cases, these interns also reported that they received higher starting salaries, earned more money over time, and experienced greater job satisfaction (Coco, 2000; Gault et al., 2000; Knemeyer & Murphy, 2002; Taylor, 1988). Other research has explored the benefits of internships beyond monetary matters. These studies addressed job satisfaction and explored the transition of graduates to their careers. Researchers found that students who participated in internships reported a better experience adjusting to, and a better understanding of, the world of work (Divine et al., 2007; Hyman-Parker & Smith, 1998). According to Gault et. al. (2000), experience

– easily attained through internships – continues to be one of the most important attributes an entry-level employee can offer an employer. Hurst, Thye, and Wise (2014) echo this claiming that internships are “one of the best ways” to gain relevant work experience and increase student’s marketability (p.58).

Internships have also been evaluated as a means of developing skills that are complimentary, but not necessarily predictive of, employment. Knemeyer and Murphy (2002) concluded that internships could be a successful method of developing communication skills. Others have documented that students who participated in internships exhibit enhanced leadership skills and improved creative thinking (Gault et al., 2000; Schambach & Dirks 2002). Cook et al. (2004) determined that 87% of internship participants felt that the experience improved their ability to get along with people in work situations and helped them learn to work with a variety of people in a variety of different work environments. In the same study, 70% of the participants reported that their internship experience helped them mature as a person (Cook et al., 2004).

Benefits to employers

It is not uncommon for internships to be referred to as a win-win situation for the intern and the employer. What started out as a beneficial endeavor for a few students has quickly become an expectation that all students must fulfill. Fifteen years ago it may have been viewed as a ‘luxury’ to go on an internship; today many employers credit work experience as the differentiating factor when hiring new employees in business, marketing, accounting, medicine, law, and agriculture (Knemeyer & Murphy, 2000). Internships are increasingly being relied upon to give students the on-the-job training

while in school that is so highly valued by industry leaders when these interns graduate (Knemeyer & Murphy, 2000; Spence, 1973).

Employers also view internships as an excellent method of recruiting new employees and a source of part time help, help that is often cheap or free, during high volume times (Maskookie, Rama, & Raghundandan, 1998; Stiglitz, 1975). Other documented employer benefits include having the first choice of the best students and the opportunity for students and employers to learn about each other - which helps reduce turnover among new hires (Coco, 2000; Crumbley & Summers, 1998; Thiel & Hartley, 1997). Even companies not seeking new employees have been shown to benefit from internships. Interns are valuable in the work place and perceived by many employers as a source of qualified, low cost, motivated workers (Coco, 2000; Divine et al., 2007; Knemeyer & Murphy, 2002). In addition, businesses strengthen their relationships with schools and gain exposure to new ideas and the latest research (Divine et al., 2007; Gault et al., 2000; Knemeyer & Murphy, 2002; Thiel & Hartley, 1997).

Benefits to universities

The value of internships has not been lost on the colleges and universities that offer them. Not only have they been shown to increase colleges connections with the local community, more specifically, they have been found to facilitate networking and to build relationships with the industry (Divine et al., 2007; Gault et al., 2008; Thiel & Hartley, 1997). Internships strengthen departments' reputations and frequently lead to the availability of additional funding sources (Divine et al., 2007; Thiel & Hartley, 1997; Weible, 2009). Indeed, research has shown that internships have a positive impact on

university-community relations but the benefits to colleges do not stop there. Research indicates that strong internship programs are important to prospective students.

As colleges and universities focus more on recruitment and retention, internships play a role. Weible (2009) concluded that the availability of internships is an effective recruitment tool in attracting students and garnering positive support from their parents, and simultaneously affecting economic development. The relationships between faculty, students and the industry fostered through internships has paved the way for external curricular assessment through employer feedback and their increased participation in advisory committees (Divine et al., 2007; Thiel & Hartley, 1997). Such feedback can be critical in evaluating program curricula and assessing how well-prepared graduates are to succeed. The more positively viewed a program is by the industry, the stronger its reputation, a factor important for attracting more students in the increasingly competitive world of college recruitment (Weible, 2009).

Universities and colleges also stand to benefit financially from internships. In a time when many are being forced to adapt their budget models and explore additional forms of fundraising to supplement lagging government resources, internships can be leveraged as an important method of outreach to stakeholders and to foster 'friend' raising (Weible, 2009). Research on fundraising indicates that donations are often made based on relationships (Hall, 2002). When businesses have stronger relationships with departments through hosting interns and/or feel valued for the feedback to a program they provide, it stands to reason that they could be more inclined to donate.

Numerous benefits have been associated with internships. All parties involved, the students, the employers, and the universities, stand to gain from participating in them.

There is considerable research exploring different aspects of internships, the majority of which has shown them favorable for developing job related skills, providing employers the opportunity to evaluate and develop future employees, and building relationships vital to many universities. From business to marketing, communications to computer science, the literature leaves little doubt that internships can play a significant role in bridging the gap between the classroom and the industry.

However, there are drawbacks and unanswered questions regarding internships; gaps and inconsistencies in the data supporting internships exist. Some of the assumptions made when drawing conclusions about internships may not be theoretically sound (e.g., there is a reliance on anecdotal information) and although the benefits are implied for every major course of study, a majority of the research has focused on business interns (Callanan & Benzing, 2004; Gault et. al., 2000; Pedro, 1984). Whether one digs deeper into internship-related internship research or takes a step back and looks at the bigger picture, some key weaknesses in the body of literature as a whole become apparent.

The lack of research on internships

Not all research favors internships. Initially, the major criticism of the use of internships in academia stemmed from the lack of scientific scrutiny altogether (Eyler, 1993). An early review of literature related to internships by English and Lewison in 1979 found that despite an impressive list of apparent benefits to all involved, internships were highly undervalued and their use was not well-supported with existing data. For two decades, the late 1970s through the late 1990s, the only research related to internships consisted of some essays and a few empirical investigations (Eyler, 1993). Many

researchers noted that these investigations did not maintain the rigor necessary to validate the claimed benefits. There was an over-reliance on conversational data and correlation (Eyler, 1993; Tobias, 1996).

Similar limitations still exist. Although many studies report benefits for all involved from participating in internships, the evidence supporting such claims remains primarily anecdotal (Tobias, 1996; Schambach & Dirks, 2002). Nearly all of the research surrounding internships is limited to students' perceptions of learning or reflections on their experience (Tobias, 1996). Intervening variables render internship effects difficult to isolate. The majority of the studies measuring the benefits of internships studied only students who elected to do the internship.

While a few studies appropriately employ some statistical controls related to self-selection (Allen & Van der Velden, 2007; Fuller & Schoenberger, 1991; Klein & Weiss, 2011) others largely ignore it or focus entirely on correlations (Blackwell, Harvey, Bowes, Williamson, Lane, Howard & Williams, 1999; Richards, 1984). The recency effect looms over much of the research conducted on the benefits of internships since students are studied immediately following the experience. It is equally possible that the perceived benefits fade with time or are only realized at a later time.

With the preponderance of evidence that supports internships coming from those that are optional, the question can be asked: "Are the benefits of internships the same when the experience is required? Is it possible that the students who self-select an internship already have the skillset that is included in the perceived benefits?" (Franzen & Hecken, 2002). Complicating the issue is the disparity between the minimal amount of

research focused on internships and the considerable increase in their popularity in higher education (Coco, 2000).

While the benefits discussed in the literature seem plausible and realistic, it has yet to be convincingly established that all students realize such benefits from every internship. Even if they do, some have questioned whether or not those benefits warrant educational credibility (Grzerlkowski, 1986). Grzelkowski (1986) found that some faculty view internships as less legitimate because the experiences are too divorced from classroom learning. Many college faculty revealed widespread skepticism about experiential learning in general which resulted in their limited commitment towards its use (Gore & Nelson, 1984). At the heart of their concern was a reservation of the ability of workplace activities to assist in achieving academic goals (Gore & Nelson, 1984).

Critics also argue that experience alone does not warrant academic credit or the investment of valuable academic resources (Whitaker, 1989). The time and financial commitment necessary to manage successful internships (and other experiential learning programs) is significant. Yet not all universities recognize their worth enough to invest the resources necessary to ensure their quality and/or continued growth (Gore & Nelson, 1984).

Challenges of program management

The internship coordinator

Recently, researchers have studied the management of internship programs and concluded that the task was challenging. Substantial or mandatory internship programs require considerable oversight. Often an internship director position is created for the task (Divine et al., 2007). In other cases, the workload required to manage internships is

dispersed among existing faculty or added to staff duties (Divine et al., 2007). The success of any internship program is often directly related to an effective director (Divine et al., 2007). Therefore, the importance of such role cannot be overlooked even though these positions remain difficult to fill.

Finding an effective internship director can be difficult for three reasons. First, the position requires a unique combination of abilities, knowledge, and contacts (Divine et al., 2007). Internship directors need to be skilled at communication, mentoring, advising, networking, conflict resolution, teaching, planning, assessment, and selling in addition to having a working knowledge of the various careers related to their degree program (Hyman-Parker & Smith, 1998; Divine, et al., 2007). They also need to be able to effectively teach job search and interviewing skills even while these are not traditional areas for academic expertise.

The second reason follows logically. The unique nature of the position of internship coordinator and the required skillset can make the position unattractive to many in academia (Divine et al., 2007). The teaching involved in supervising interns is not traditional classroom style teaching, the assessment is not typical exam type grading, and the administrative duties are less related to managing budgets and staff than they are to recruiting internship sites, managing relationships, and providing internship oversight. Finding appropriate candidates has proven difficult for many programs (Divine et al., 2007).

Finally, in addition to the unique skill set needed and the scarcity of individuals who are both qualified and interested, the time and effort required to oversee an internship is substantial. The demanding work load involves recruiting and approving

internship sights, training both students and their internship hosts on requirements and expectations, establishing program guidelines, developing plans, goals and learning objectives, tracking and monitoring internship progression, and developing and implementing assessment methods. These tasks leave little room for teaching, extension, and/or research. Depending on the field of internships, the nature of the work, and whether sites are local or international placements, internship directors may need to be accessible 24/7 in case of emergencies – something not usually associated with academic appointments.

Creating a position to supervise internships requires a significant investment of time and money developing a position, securing funding, conducting a search, and providing the ongoing support necessary to maintain the position. The alternative, the absence of an internship director, leads to the internship oversight duties being dispersed among faculty or staff and in some cases has increased the likelihood of being neglected or overlooked (Divine et al., 2007). Distributed management can also negatively impact uniformity and equality among internships (Divine et al., 2007). Some internship programs have a local focus while others have a national or international scope. The more geographically dispersed the internships are the more time commitment they require to manage.

Variability among the internship experiences

Variability among internships is considerable and can be a significant confounding variable in internship-related research. Studies evaluating different types of internships have shown demonstrably that not all internships are created equally. Research suggests that internship programs which are not carefully designed can result in

disappointing experiences for interns (Hite & Bellizzi, 1986). Such internships include, but are not limited to, those with unclear standards, misrepresentation of the duties of the internship and/or misunderstandings related to the merits of the job (Hite & Bellizzi, 1986; Satariano & Rogers, 1979). Disappointment has also occurred among employers who found internship programs too costly to maintain, and universities who expressed dissatisfaction with businesses being ineffective at leading interns to truly meaningful work (Hite & Bellizzi, 1986).

The financial component of internships

The financial management of internships also influences opinions of internships. At the forefront is the issue of compensation. Students who were paid for their internship work have reported satisfaction with being able to receive both monetary compensation and academic credit (Hite & Bellizzi, 1986). But students who were not paid, or paid very little, have expressed subsequent dissatisfaction with their internship experience (Schambach & Kephart, 1997). In fact, one study at Illinois State University found that although a significant portion of students were eager for their internship, a few voiced the opinion that the internship program was a university supported industrial conspiracy to co-opt talented professional labor at below market wages (Schambach & Dirks, 2002). This is not isolated research. Schambach and Kephart (1997) summarized that one inhibitor to students completing an internship if not required to do so was their belief that internships were a conspiracy that required students to work for employers at below market rates while also being forced to pay the cost of tuition and fees for this unwanted obligation.

Legal considerations

Even the legal factors governing management of internships and whether or not interns can be paid are confusing. The prevalence of unpaid internships inspired the Department of Education to develop a list of qualifications regulating whether an internship qualifies as paid or unpaid. According to their most recent version of the Fair Labor Standards Act (2016) an internship is exempt for monetary compensation if it occurs at non-profit charitable organizations where interns ‘volunteer’ without expectation of compensation or if it meets all of the following requirements:

1. It includes actual operation of facilities of the employer but is similar to training given in an educational environment;
2. It exists for the benefit of the student;
3. The intern does not replace regular employees;
4. The employer provides training that offers no immediate advantage from the activities of the intern;
5. The intern is not guaranteed a job upon completion of the internship; and
6. The employer and intern both agree that the intern is not entitled to wages.

When internships fail to meet all six of the aforementioned requirements, a federal mandate requires that the interns be paid at least minimum wage. But in practice, the requirement for financial compensation is often ignored. The culture of competition surrounding some internships creates an environment where interns will accept undesirable terms (usually little or no compensation) based on the belief that if they object or decline someone else will take their place.

Compensation is not the only financial factor that can inhibit internships. The time and expense involved in securing an internship, concerns about finding affordable housing near the internship site, an unwillingness to forego higher paying jobs for the experience, and a general discomfort with taking a non-traditional type of course have all been shown to prevent students from partaking in an optional internship (Schambach & Kephart, 1997).

Managing student expectations

Internships can be difficult to study because their effects are elusive to isolate. One popular method discussed in the literature has been comparing student expectations and perceptions before and after an internship. Research indicates that students' expectations for their internships are unrealistic and may prove difficult to meet (Hite & Bellizzi, 1986). A study in 1986 at a major Western university surveyed undergraduate students enrolled in a marketing class about their expectations for an internship (Hite & Bellizzi, 1986). Results showed the amount of credit hours students expected to receive for their internship varied considerably from three to sixteen credit hours (Hite & Bellizzi, 1986). Meanwhile, the majority of students strongly agreed that they should be paid for their internship experience and that it should be a pass/fail class rather than one that relied on traditional letter grade (Hite & Bellizzi, 1986). If the realities of their internship fell outside their expected parameters, their overall satisfaction with the experience decreased (Hite & Bellizzi, 1986).

While those expectations may not raise many eyebrows – others did. Students strongly agreed that if they worked hard enough at their internship, additional reading and tests were unnecessary and that if they had a personality conflict with an employer they

should be allowed to withdraw from the internship rather than resolve it (Hite & Bellizzi, 1986). Expectations such as these might explain some of the dissatisfaction with internships reported in other studies. One way to foster realistic expectations would be to have training for internships before students participate in them. Of course, this would also increase the time commitment related to managing internships discussed earlier. Since managing internships is a high time, high resource endeavor, research related to them carry important implications.

Summary

Students entrust universities with a considerable financial investment and substantial time in exchange for an education deemed relevant in today's society. Consequently, universities are responsible for making decisions on behalf of their students. Anything that contributes to a more thorough understanding of the implications of these programmatic decisions warrants thoughtful study and close examination.

The decision to require internships is not arrived at arbitrarily. It is the result of substantial thought, planning, debating, and consideration. It is questionable, however, if research related to internships does in fact demonstrate the benefits of internships when participation is required rather than elective. This study draws on an understanding of the historical and modern influences driving higher education curriculum to consider the policy of requiring internships. It then considers the framework of experiential education, specifically from two models - Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle and Joplin's Experiential Learning Model, to evaluate the framework of the mandatory internships in this study. Finally, it encompasses an extensive review of the existing body of research related to internships, evaluating conclusions, identifying gaps, and determining

relevance as they relate to the research questions. All three elements, a review of literature, an identification of the methodology being evaluated, and the context of the issue inform the experimental design and the implications drawn from the resulting data.

Internships are a form of experiential education that is at the center of the debate surrounding vocational and liberal arts-based coursework in higher education. The next logical step in the study of internships is to move beyond anecdotal reports, research confined to only a few majors, and the examination of the results of optional internships to a comparison of the effects of internships between students who would choose an optional internship experience and those who would only complete the experience if it was required and between recent college graduates and their predecessors.

Like the photograph shown by the photographer discussed in Chapter 1, internships are a snapshot of a much bigger picture. Many things can lay the groundwork for their success and numerous factors can affect their impact. The focus of this study is to gain insight into student's perspectives of their benefits and explore if they hold the same benefits for students who are required to participate in them as those who elected to.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Universities and colleges make their curricular decisions with the intent of benefitting students and better preparing them for success in their chosen professions. One such component of recent curricular change has been the significant increase of internships as a part of core requirements in many degrees (Coco, 2000). The benefits to students, employers, and institutions of higher education have supported the implementation of these off-campus experiences and has inspired many colleges and universities to move from internships that had been voluntary to internships that are required. However, this shift from voluntary to mandatory internships has been studied very little, if at all. Currently, no research exists that compares students' perceptions of the effects of required internships (Klein & Weiss, 2011). Pertinent questions remain unasked: Do students who only participate in an internship because it is required benefit? Do they think that internships should be required of all students? And most significantly, what exactly are the benefits of mandatory internships?

This study analyzes the survey responses of students (past and present) in an Equine Science and Management degree program that adopted a mandatory internship requirement in 2007. The intent of the study was to deepen the understanding of the effects of a mandatory internship policy in higher education. The research questions were:

1. To what extent do students who have been required to complete an internship view it as beneficial? (Why or why not)

- 1a. How satisfied are students who have completed a mandatory internship with the experience?
- 1b. How well did students who participated in a mandatory internship feel it prepared them for certain career skills?
- 1c. Is there a relationship between how well students who completed a mandatory internship felt their internship prepared them at certain career skills compared to how their overall undergraduate experience prepared them at the same skills?
2. To what extent do students who have been required to complete a mandatory internship believe other students should also be required to do one? (Why or why not)
 - 2a. Is there a relationship between the primary reason a student completed their internship and whether they agreed or disagreed with the mandatory internship policy?
3. To what extent does a student's primary reason for going on internship correlate with their level of satisfaction with the experience?
 - 3a. Is there a relationship between the primary reason a student completed their internship and how beneficially they viewed it?
 - 3b. Is there a relationship between the primary reason a student completed their internship and job benefits?
 - 3c. Is there a relationship between the primary reason a student completed their internship and how they felt it prepared them at certain career skills?

3d. Is there a relationship between the primary reason a student completed their internship and how they felt their internship prepared them at certain career skills compared to how their overall undergraduate experience prepared them at the same skills?

4. In what ways does time influence students' perception of the benefits they gained from an internship (i.e. right after they complete it, years after completing it, etc.)?

4a. Does the amount of time that has passed since completing an internship influence participant's view of the mandatory internship policy?

A mixed-methods approach was determined to be the most robust method based on the goal of identifying statistically significant results and the desire for an in-depth understanding of these results. The data that were collected included survey responses (both structured and open-ended) and semi-structured interviews. This chapter will describe the design of the study, including participant selection, data collection, data analysis, the role of the researcher, trustworthiness of the study, and the limitations of the study.

Design of the Study

A thoughtful combination of quantitative and qualitative methods has the power to expand the scope and deepen the understanding of any research endeavor (Sandelowski, 2000). This was a two-part study consisting of a survey and follow-up, semi-structured interviews. This mixed-method approach draws on the strengths associated with both types of research; quantitative research employs probability sampling to allow for statistically significant inferences while qualitative research

employs purposeful sampling to enhance understanding of information that numbers alone cannot represent (Patton, 1990). Mixed-method studies combine qualitative and quantitative techniques into one study in order to provide a broader perspective (Greene & Caracelli, 1997). This study implemented quantitative and qualitative research methods separately, analyzed the data individually, and then used triangulation to study them together. Triangulation is a method of combining multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This study incorporated triangulation of the data by comparing survey results, open-ended survey data and interview survey data related to the same questions (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Quantitative experiments are an effective method for testing hypotheses since mathematical tools rely on structured, repeatable research designs aimed at answering clearly-defined research questions (Muijs, 2004). Quantitative methods can identify relationships as well as their significance (Buckingham & Saunders, 2004). Quantitative methods selected to study people typically employ surveys, questionnaires, and polls (Buckingham & Saunders, 2004). These methods, which are objective rather than subjective, produce measurements that can be statistically, mathematically, and/or numerically analyzed (Buckingham & Saunders, 2004). The overarching goal of quantitative research in this case is to produce numerical data that can be generalized for different groups of people or to quantify a particular phenomenon (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The lack of existing research examining mandatory internships combined with the scarcity of empirical studies on internships in general support including quantitative methods in this study.

Qualitative methodology, on the other hand, focuses on identifying trends in thoughts and opinions (Bazeley, 2013). The methods in qualitative research, which can be less structured than quantitative methods, are better suited for attempts to explain the reasons behind causal relationships. Consequently, researchers often use qualitative studies to try to understand situations as a whole, rather than focusing solely on their parts (Moustakas, 1994). Qualitative studies involve observing, describing, interpreting, and analyzing the way people experience, act on, or think about themselves or the world around them (Schatzman, 1991; Stake, 2010). These measures are suitable when a complex, detailed understanding of an issue is needed (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The variable nature of student perceptions related to mandatory internship supports the use of qualitative methods, which can lend a richer understanding of the research questions than relying entirely on quantitative methods.

The combination of the two methods can be particularly effective when studying people. Advocates of mixed-method research make the obvious argument that humans are complex beings and thus require complex research designs (Sandelowski, 2000). The advantage of using a mixed-method approach for this particular study includes the potential to uncover statistically significant findings and the ability to offer an in-depth understanding of them. The results of this study produced two sets of data that strengthen and inform each other. Furthermore, a review of research surrounding internships reveals very few empirical studies and no mixed-method ones (Klein & Weiss, 2011; Coco, 2000; Weible, 2009).

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB)

An IRB Exemption Application for this study was submitted to the Office of Research Integrity (ORI) at the university where the study was conducted on April 24, 2017. A request for revisions was received on May 1, 2017 and the approval was received on June 1, 2017. IRB #17-0365 was assigned to this research project (See Appendix A).

Quantitative Data

Participant Selection

Participants in this study were current and former students of the Equine Science and Management (ESMA) Program at a major land grant institution in the US who had participated in a mandatory internship. The total number of students in this population was 374 and included current students, graduates, and those who completed an internship but may not have completed the degree. All were invited to complete an on-line survey and no incentives, financial or otherwise, were offered for participation in this study.

This population was identified as a good fit to study the research questions in this study for three reasons: First, it represents a program that has a well-established mandatory internship program. For ten years, a required internship has been a curricular requirement for the ESMA degree. This is different than the body of existing internship research that focuses almost entirely on elective internships. Second, this population represents students in a major not previously included in existing internship studies. The need for research across all majors is supported by the fact that existing internship-related research has focused overwhelmingly on business interns with very little inclusion of other majors (Callanan & Benzing, 2004; Gault et. al., 2000; Pedro, 1984). Finally, this

population includes a wide variety of internship experiences. The ESMA internship program includes both hands-on and office-type positions across numerous breeds of horses and disciplines (e.g., Thoroughbred, Quarter Horse, Sport Horse, Hunter/Jumper, Dressage, etc.) at local, national, and international locations, yet the program imposes structural uniformity on each of them.

The uniformity of the internship requirement for the ESMA degree is manifested in several ways: All internships last for 150 contact hours, are awarded 3 credit hours, are assessed with a grade, and require the completion of the same assignments that include a Learning Contract, Goals Sheet, Mid-term Check-in, Reflection Paper, at least three photographs, and an Internship Evaluation. (See Appendix B for the EQM 399 Syllabus with a description of the assignments).

Survey instrument

The survey tool designed for this study was administered electronically and managed via REDCap. Emails were uploaded to the system and an invitation to participate with the embedded link was sent out on Friday, July 10th 2017. Up to three follow-up reminder emails were sent on day three, day ten and day twenty-three of the twenty-four days the survey remained open. The survey closed Monday, July 24th at midnight. (See Appendix C for the Survey Instrument.)

Data Analysis

Descriptive Statistics

The demographics of the survey participants were identified and the survey data was analyzed according to each research question.

Likert scale data analysis

Outlined below is how the Likert scale data was analyzed according to each research question. The data produced by the Likert scales in this study were ordinal and research suggests that interpreting ordinal data can be challenging (Jakobsson, 2004). As a general rule, means and standard deviations are invalid parameters for descriptive statistics related to ordinal data as are any parametric analysis based on the requirement of normal distributions (Allen & Seaman, 2004). Therefore, a presentation of the distribution of responses was determined to be a good fit for this dataset due to the nonparametric nature of attitudes and opinions (Jakobsson, 2004). Where group differences and relationships were evaluated, the Chi-Square Test of Independence to be a good fit to analyze group differences on ordinal variables.

Groups

To answer research questions 2a, 3, 3a, 3b, 3c, and 3d considering the differences between students who would have participated in an internship even if it had not been required and students who completed one to some degree because it was required, two groups were identified based on why they reported participating in their internship. The reason for participating in their internship was identified by their responses to the reason scale question and, for those who did not complete the reason scale question, responses to the reason rank order question. Each question was designed to target the primary reason why an individual participated in their internship. The numerical scale question, which was the first question used to identify the groups, was selected because it allowed participants to identify where they fell on a scale between whether they would have completed an internship if it had not been required and if they completed it only because it was required to graduate.

The scale format was selected because it was more focused than a rank order (it compared how much the requirement was a factor in why they completed their internship) and because it did not force participants to choose one reason or another. Instead, the scale allowed participants to represent a combination of the requirement being the sole factor for why they completed their internship and the requirement not being a factor at all. The scale format also produced interval - rather than ordinal - data which some argue is more amenable to clear interpretation (Vigderhous, 1977). Finally, a scale format was chosen because it yielded a continuous interval measurement by which a threshold could be established to identify the two groups of interest in this study and, when compared to responses on a rank scale, could help establish reliability (Vigderhous, 1977).

The scale used in this survey included a range of 0-100 between how much the requirement factored into why the participant completed their internship. On one end of the scale they could identify if they completed their internship only because it was required to graduate and on the other end they could indicate if they would have completed an internship even if it wasn't required. They could also place the marker to represent a varying combination of the two reasons where appropriate. The directions for this question stated:

Many factors contribute to why students complete their EQM xx9 internship.

Considering this, on the scale below please place the marker where it best represents why you completed your EQM 3xx internship. If the reason you completed it was a combination of both reasons please place the marker where it best represents your reasoning.

(Example: A mark in the middle means that you completed your internship 50% because it was required and 50% because you would have done an internship even if it wasn't required.)

The second question used to identify the groups in this study was a rank order question. The format of this question was selected, in part, because it allowed students to identify the most important reason they went on their internship from a list of reasons instead of forcing them to choose between two reasons. This question provided a different method of identifying the primary reason students participated in their internship. In this study, participants were asked to select the “most important reason” they completed their internship. The list of reasons was compiled from existing internship-related research regarding the reasons students participate in internships, including: to gain industry experience, build their network, help decide a career path, strengthen resume, and because they were encouraged to complete one by an advisor, professor, parent, etc. (Klein, & Weiss, 2011; Taylor, 1988).

Data from survey responses to the rank order and numerical scale questions were analyzed visually and numerically to determine the best method for identifying the two groups (those who would have participated in an internship even if it weren’t required and those who did so to some degree because it was required). The rank order and numerical scale data were then analyzed for reliability.

Data from the reason scale question was selected as the best measurement for how much the requirement factored into why the participant completed their internship because it was the only question that focused entirely on how much the requirement factored into their decision to participate in an internship. Thus was selected as the first threshold for identifying participants as belonging to Group 1 or Group 2 because it allowed the researcher to identify the degree to which the requirement influenced why the student participated in their internship – which was the focus of research questions 2a, 3,

3a, 3b, 3c, and 3d. After a visual and numerical analysis of the data, a threshold of 95 on the reason scale was selected to differentiate the two groups (≥ 95 = students who would have completed an internship even if it was not required, ≤ 94 = students who completed an internship to some degree because it was required). The threshold of 95 was chosen because it captured all of the students who reported that they were not at all influenced by the requirement – the goal of the group analysis in this study, while still allowing for a small amount of leniency considering responses were on a 100-point scale.

Because not all of the participants completed the reason scale question, those with missing values were grouped according to their response on the reason rank question. This decision was made so that those with missing reason scale values could still be included and the entire dataset analyzed. Those grouped according to the reason rank question were identified as being in Group 1 if they listed any primary reason for participating in their internship other than the fact that it was required. Those who identified the fact that the internship was required as their primary reason for participating in it were placed in Group 2.

Based on these designations:

Group 1 – (students who would have completed an internship even if it was not required) was defined as:

1. Participants with a reason scale score ≥ 95 (100 = would have completed an internship even if not required)
2. If no reason scale data was available, participants with a reason rank score = 1 (industry experience), 2 (networking), 3 (decide career), 5 (resume), 6 (encouraged by someone), or 7 (other)

Group 2 – (students who completed an internship to some degree because it was required) was defined as:

1. Participants with a reason scale score ≤ 94 (0 = only completed it because it was required)
2. If no reason scale data was available, participants with a reason rank score = 4 (because it was required)

To determine the reliability of measuring the construct of interest -- the primary reason students completed their internship -- by these two questions and the accuracy of the groups' distinctions, the correlation between responses on the reason scale question and the rank order reason question were evaluated using the Chi-Square Test of Independence. The Chi-Square Test of Independence was selected because it is a statistical test that evaluates group differences between the distribution of categorical variables (McHugh, 2013). In this case the Chi-Square Test was used to evaluate the relationship between a threshold of 4 for reason rank and a threshold of 95 for reason scale.

Once the groups were identified and reliability verified, the survey data was analyzed according to each research question. The research questions and the null hypothesis (where appropriate) used to answer them were as follows.

Research Question 1:

To what extent do students who have been required to complete an internship view it as beneficial? Why or why not.

The purpose of this research question was to determine whether students who were required to complete an internship viewed the experience as beneficial. To answer

this question survey responses regarding how beneficially they viewed their internship were evaluated. How beneficially participants viewed their internship was measured on a 4-point Likert scale (*Not Beneficial, Somewhat Beneficial, Very Beneficial, Extremely Beneficial*). Likert scales are commonly used to measure attitudes (Likert, 1932; Vigderhous, 1977).

One element of the use of Likert scales that is debatable but not widely researched is the inclusion or exclusion of a midpoint – specifically on five-point Likert scales (Garland, 1991; Armstrong, 1987). It was decided not to use a midpoint in the scale for this question for three reasons. First, research suggests eliminating the mid-point can help decrease social desirability bias, which may be more likely in this study due to the relationship between the participant and the researcher (as discussed in the Role of the Researcher section in this Chapter) (Garland, 1991). Second, because the question was worded in a way that did not necessarily allow for a middle or neutral option. Third, it was originally written as a beneficial/not beneficial question and, after piloting the survey, was expanded to capture more information and offer participants more variability in their answer, but it was not expanded to the point of adding a mid-point.

Research Question 1a: How satisfied are students who have completed a mandatory internship with the experience?

The purpose of this research question was to evaluate how satisfied students who participated in a mandatory internship were with the experience. To answer this question survey responses regarding how satisfied they were with their internship were evaluated. How satisfied students were with their internship experience was measured using a 5-point Likert scale (*Very satisfied, Satisfied, Neither satisfied or unsatisfied, Unsatisfied,*

Very unsatisfied). A 5-point Likert scale was used on this question because of the wording selected and the possibility of a neutral opinion.

Research Question 1b: How well did students who participated in a mandatory internship feel it prepared them for certain career skills?

The purpose of this study was to evaluate how well students in this study felt their internship prepared them at certain career skills. To evaluate how well their internship prepared them for career skills, this study examined 11 skills previously identified by both employers and students for their perceived value in evaluating potential employees and predicting early career success (Kelley & Gaedeke, 1990; Karakaya & Karakaya, 1996). The skills were measured using 11-items (*Creative thinking, Information searching, Problem solving, Job interviewing, Job networking, Resume writing, Leadership, Teamwork, Interpersonal communication, Oral presentation, Written communication*) each measured on a 5-point Likert scale (*Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither disagree nor agree, Agree, Strongly agree*). A 5-point Likert scale was used on this question because of the wording selected and the possibility of a neutral opinion. To answer this research question, responses to the 11-items on a 5-point Likert scale (*Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither disagree nor agree, Agree, Strongly Agree*) were evaluated.

Research Question 1c: Is there a difference between how well students who completed a mandatory internship felt their internship prepared them well at certain career skills compared how well their overall undergraduate experience prepared them at the same skills?

To answer this question a null hypothesis assuming no difference between how well their internship versus how well their overall undergraduate experience prepared them at certain career skills was tested. This hypothesis was used to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between how well students felt their internship versus their overall undergraduate experience prepared them at certain career skills. This study used 11 skills previously identified by both employers and students for their perceived value in evaluating potential employees and predicting early career success (Kelley & Gaedeke, 1990; Karakaya & Karakaya, 1996). The skills were measured using 11-items (*Creative thinking, Information searching, Problem solving, Job interviewing, Job networking, Resume writing, Leadership, Teamwork, Interpersonal communication, Oral presentation, Written communication*) measured on a 5-point Likert scale (*Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither disagree nor agree, Agree, Strongly agree*).

Responses were analyzed using the Chi-Square Test of Independence. The Chi-Square Test of Independence is a statistical test that evaluates group differences between the distribution of ordinal variables (McHugh, 2013). In this case the Chi-Square Test was used to evaluate the relationship between the distribution of responses for how well students who participated in a mandatory internship felt their internship versus their overall undergraduate experience prepared them for certain career skills.

Research Question 2:

To what extent do students who have been required to complete an internship believe other students should also be required to do one? Why or why not.

The purpose of this research question was to understand how students who were required to complete an internship viewed the policy of requiring internships. To answer

this question, participant responses regarding whether all Equine Science and Management Students at their institution should be required to complete an internship as measured on a 4-point Likert scale (*Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree*) were analyzed. Likert scales are commonly used to measure attitudes (Likert, 1932; Vigderhous, 1977).

Research Question 2a: Is there a relationship between the primary reason that students completed their internship and whether they agreed or disagreed with the mandatory internship policy.

The purpose of this question was to determine if there is a relationship between the primary reason a student participated in their internship and whether they felt all other students should also be required to complete one. To answer this question a null hypothesis assuming no relationship between the primary reason students completed their internship and whether they felt other students should be required to do one was tested. This hypothesis was used to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between the primary reason students participated in their internship and their view of the mandatory internship policy. To test this hypothesis, the Chi-Square Test of Independence was used.

The Chi-Square Test of Independence is a statistical test that evaluates group differences between ordinal variables (McHugh, 2013). In this case the Chi-Square Test was used to evaluate the relationship between the distribution of responses related to whether every Equine Science and Management Student at UK should be required to complete an internship and the primary reason they participated in an internship (*Group 1 and Group 2*).

Research Question 3:

To what extent does a student's primary reason for going on an internship correlate with their level of satisfaction with the experience?

The purpose of this research question was to determine if there was a relationship between the primary reason a student participated in an internship and their level of satisfaction with the experience. To answer this question a null hypothesis assuming no relationship between how satisfied participants were with their internship and the primary reason they participated in their internship (*Group 1 and Group 2*) was tested. This hypothesis was used to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between the primary reason students participated in their internship and how satisfied they were with it. To test this the Chi-Square Test of Independence was used.

The Chi-Square Test of Independence is a statistical test that evaluates group differences between ordinal variables (McHugh, 2013). How satisfied students were with their internship experience was measured using a 5-point Likert scale (*Very satisfied, Satisfied, Neither satisfied or unsatisfied, Unsatisfied, Very unsatisfied*). In this case the Chi-Square Test was used to evaluate the relationship between the distribution of responses of how satisfied or unsatisfied respondents were with their internship experience and the primary reason they participated in the internship (*Group 1 and Group 2*).

Research Question 3a: Is there a relationship between the primary reason a student completed their internship and how beneficially they viewed it?

The purpose of this research question was to determine if there was a relationship between the primary reason a student participated in an internship and how beneficially

they viewed it. To answer this question a null hypothesis assuming no relationship between how beneficial participants felt their internship was and the primary reason they participated in their internship (*Group 1 and Group 2*) was tested. This hypothesis was used to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between the primary reason students participated in their internship and how beneficially they viewed it. This hypothesis was tested using the Chi-Square Test of Independence.

The Chi-Square Test of Independence is a statistical test that evaluates group differences between the distribution of ordinal variables (McHugh, 2013). How beneficially survey participants viewed their internship was measured on a 4-point Likert scale (*Not Beneficial, Somewhat Beneficial, Very Beneficial, Extremely Beneficial*). In this case the Chi-Square Test was used to evaluate the relationship between distribution of responses to how beneficially students viewed their internship and the primary reason they participated in an internship (*Group 1 and Group 2*).

Research Question 3b: Is there a relationship between the primary reason that students completed their internship and job benefits?

The purpose of this research question was to determine if there was a relationship between the primary reason a student participated in their internship and the job benefits they gained from it. Job benefits in this study were measured by how much survey respondents believed their internship contributed to their current job (*Did not contribute at all, Contributed somewhat, Contributed considerably*), their current salary range (*Less than \$25,000, \$25,000 - \$34,999, \$35,000 – \$49,999, \$50,000 - \$74,999, \$75,000 - \$99,999, \$100,000 - \$149,000, \$150,000 or more*), their current job benefits (*Health insurance, Retirement plan, Vacation time, Housing, Cell phone, Automobile, Laptop or*

IPad, other), whether they were employed in the equine industry (*yes, no*), and how many months passed between when they graduated and their first full-time job (*0-3 month, 4-6 months, 7-9 months, 10-12 months, More than 12 months*).

To answer this question a null hypothesis assuming no relationship between the primary reason a student participated in their internship and their job benefits was tested. This hypothesis was used to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between the primary reason a student participated in their internship and job benefits. The null hypothesis was tested using the Chi-Square Test of Independence.

The Chi-Square Test of Independence is a statistical test that evaluates group differences between ordinal variables (McHugh, 2013). In this case the Chi-Square Test was used to evaluate the relationship between the distribution of responses of the benefits gained from their internship and the primary reason they participated in their internship (*Group 1 and Group 2*).

Research Question 3c: Is there a relationship between the primary reason a student completed their internship and how well they felt it prepared them at certain career skills?

The purpose of this question was to determine if there was a relationship between the primary reason a student participated in their internship and how well they felt it prepared them at certain career skills.

To answer this question a null hypothesis assuming no relationship between the primary reason a student participated in their internship and how well it prepared them at certain career skills was tested. This hypothesis was used to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between the primary reason a student participated in

an internship and how well it prepared them at certain career skills. The null hypothesis was tested using the Chi-Square Test of Independence.

The Chi-Square Test of Independence is a statistical test that evaluates group differences between the distribution of ordinal variables (McHugh, 2013). In this case the Chi-Square Test was used first to evaluate if there was a relationship between the skills attributed to their internship and the primary reason they participated in the internship (*Group 1 and Group 2*).

Research Question 3d: Is there a relationship between the primary reason a student completed their internship and how well they felt it prepared them at certain career skills compared to how well their overall undergraduate experience prepared them at the same skills?

The purpose of this question was to determine if there was a relationship between the primary reason a student participated in their internship and how well they felt it versus their overall undergraduate experience prepared them at certain career skills.

To answer this question a null hypothesis assuming no relationship between the primary reason a student participated in their internship and how well it versus their overall undergraduate experience prepared them at certain career skills was tested. This hypothesis was used to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between the primary reason a student participated in an internship and career skill development. The null hypothesis was tested using the Chi-Square Test of Independence.

The Chi-Square Test of Independence is a statistical test that evaluates group differences between the distribution of ordinal variables (McHugh, 2013). In this case the Chi-Square Test was used first to evaluate the relationship between the skills

attributed to their internship and those attributed to their overall undergraduate experience for Group 1 (students who primarily participated in an internship because it was required). Next, the Chi-Square Test was used to evaluate the relationship between the skills attributed to their internship and those attributed to their overall undergraduate experience in Group 2 (students who would have participated in an internship even if it wasn't required).

Research Question 4:

In what ways does length of time since internship completion influence students' perception of the benefits they gained from an internship (e.g. right after they complete it, years after completing it, etc.)?

The purpose of this research question was to determine if there was a relationship between the amount of time that had passed since participants had completed their internship and the perceived benefits gained it. To answer this question, participants were grouped according to the amount of time that has passed since they completed their internship (≤ 2 years, 3-4 years, and ≥ 5 years). The perceived benefits were measured by how beneficially student viewed their internship, how much it contributed to their current job, and the skills they attributed to their internship experience. As discussed earlier, how beneficially survey participants viewed their internship was measured on a 4-point Likert scale (*Not Beneficial, Somewhat Beneficial, Very Beneficial, Extremely Beneficial*). How much students felt the internship contributed to their current job was measure on a 3-point Likert scale (*Did not contribute at all, Contributed somewhat, Contributed considerably*). The skills attributed to their internship were measured using an 11-item (*Creative thinking, Information searching, Problem solving, Job interviewing,*

Job networking, Resume writing, Leadership, Teamwork, Interpersonal communication, Oral presentation, Written communication), 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither disagree nor agree, Agree, Strongly agree).

A null hypothesis assuming no relationship between the length of time that had passed since completing their internship and how beneficially they viewed it, how much it contributed to their current job and how well it prepared them at certain career skills was tested. This hypothesis was used to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between the perceived benefits of their mandatory internship and the amount of time that had passed since completing. The null hypothesis was tested using the Chi-Square Test of Independence. The Chi-Square Test of Independence is a statistical test that evaluates group differences between ordinal variables (McHugh, 2013). In this case the Chi-Square Test was used to evaluate the relationship between how beneficially participants viewed their mandatory internship and the amount of time that had passed since completing it.

Research Question 4a: Does the amount of time that has passed since completing an internship influence a participant's view of the mandatory internship policy?

The purpose of this question was to determine if there was a relationship between the amount of time that had passed since completing their internship and a participant's view of the mandatory internship policy. Participant's perception of the mandatory internship policy was measured on a 4-point Likert scale (*Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree*) regarding whether all Equine Science and Management Students at their institution should be required to complete an internship.

To answer this question a null hypothesis assuming no relationship between their perception of the mandatory internship policy and the amount of time that had passed since completing it was evaluated using the Chi-Square Test of Independence. The Chi-Square Test of Independence is a statistical test that evaluates group differences between ordinal variables (McHugh, 2013). In this case the Chi-Square Test was used to evaluate the relationship between the distribution of responses related to the mandatory internship policy and the amount of time that had passed since completing it.

T-test

In addition to the analysis described above, three Paired T-tests and one T-test were run to help interpret the Chi Square Test results. The Paired T-tests can be used to analyze Likert scale responses when treated as interval data (Roberson, Shema, Mundfrom, & Holmes, 1995). In this case, the Likert score means for how well their internship versus how well their overall undergraduate experience prepared them at certain career skills for all of the study participants, Group 1, and Group 2 were analyzed using Paired T-tests. A T-test was used to analyze how well Group 1 vs Group 2 felt their internship prepared them at certain career skills. Results of the Paired T-tests and T-tests can be found in Appendix D.

Confidence Level

A confidence level of $\alpha=0.05$ was used for all of the tests selected to reject the null hypothesis and determine statistical significance. By setting the alpha level at 0.05, the level of confidence is 95%. A 95% confidence level means that there is a 5% chance of making a Type I error (Bazely, 2013). A Type I error occurs when the null hypothesis is rejected when in reality it is true; this type of error suggests significance when in fact

something is not significant. A Type II error, on the other hand, occurs when a test fails to reject the null hypothesis (suggesting no significance) when in reality it is false (it is significant) (Bazely, 2013).

Qualitative Data

Participant selection for oral interviews

Fifty-two of the survey participants indicated they were willing to participate in a follow-up interview. From this list, a goal of 20 interview participants was set based on existing research related to the number of interviews necessary to comprise a purposeful sample (Creswell & Clark, 2007; Polkinghorne, 2005). According to Polkinghorne (2005), “Participants for qualitative study are not selected because they fulfill the representative requirements of statistical inference, but because they can provide substantial contributions to filling out the structure and character of the experience under investigation” (p. 139). Given the size of the population, the numerous research question being explored, the considerable variation of internship experiences among the population, and the anticipated range of opinions, a purposeful sample of 20 interviews was determined to be appropriate. Research supports a sample between 5 and 25 individuals to develop the possibilities of experiences (Polkinghorne, 2005). The sample size in this study exceeded most phenomenological studies (those seeking to gain an understanding of a central phenomenon) which on average consist of 10 participants (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Although not a phenomenological study, this study was similar in that it explored perceptions of a common experience.

From the list of potential interview participants, purposeful sampling was used to identify individuals who could best help one understand the range of student’s

perspectives related to mandatory internships (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Where random sampling is ideal in quantitative research, purposeful sampling increases credibility in qualitative research (Creswell & Miller 2000). In order to gather a purposeful sample of interview participants in this study, care was taken to select individuals that represented a range of perspectives on each of the four overarching research questions regarding mandatory internships. Individuals were also selected to ensure that the demographics of the purposeful sample were as representative as possible of the population being studied.

To accomplish this, first a set of criteria was established based on the four overarching research questions. Each potential interview participant was then coded by their survey responses according to these criteria.

The coding system used is outlined below by research question:

1. To gain perspective on Research Question 1- evaluating the extent to which students who have been required to participate in an internship view it as beneficial - the answers for the survey questions regarding how beneficial they believed their internship was and how much it contributed to their career were coded based on Likert scale responses.
2. To gain an understanding on Research Question 2 - whether students who have been required to complete an internship feel that others students should also be required to participate in one - responses to the survey question asking how much participants agreed with the statement that 'all students should be required to complete an internship' were coded based on Likert scale responses.

3. To offer insight into Research Question 3 - examining how much the primary reason students went on internship correlates with their level of satisfaction with the experience - survey responses for the question asking them to rank their level of satisfaction with their internship were coded based on Likert scale responses.
4. To gain an understanding of Research Question 4 - considering the influence of time on the perception of benefits gained from an internship - potential survey participants were coded according to the year they completed their internship and then separated into three groups; those that completed their internship between 2008-2010, those that completed it between 2011-2014, and those that completed it between 2015-2017.

Based on this criteria, potential interview participants were identified by those who viewed their experience as beneficial and those who did not; those who agreed with the mandatory internship policy and those who did not; those who were satisfied with their internship experience and those who were not; and whether they completed their internship recently, a few years ago, or more than a few years ago.

Once all of the potential interview participants were coded according to the established criteria, the researcher selected participants with the goal of selecting interview participants that best represented the range of perspectives across each of the four major research questions. To do this, outliers (those representing opinions that were in the minority) were selected first to ensure the broadest possible range of opinions were included.

Next, interview participants were selected to ensure representation of both students who would have completed an internship even if it had not been required and those who to some degree completed it because it was required. To accomplish this, participants were coded based on their response to the survey question asking them to identify the reason they participated in an internship on a scale of 0-100 (where 0 represented students who only completed an internship because it was required and 100 represented students who would have completed an internship even if it was not required). This coding and subsequent selection was intended to ensure that participants representing both Group 1 and Group 2 were included in the interviews.

Next, to select between remaining potential interview participants, the researcher identified two characteristics that may have influenced a student's internship experience or their perception of it and worked to ensure that there was varied representation of these factors in the sample. The criterion used to make the selection were the amount of equine experience a student had prior to their internship and how invested their internship supervisor was. Likert scale responses were coded and potential participants were selected accordingly.

Finally, the purposeful sample that had been compiled was checked to determine whether its demographics were comparable to the demographics of the target population. To do this, gender and whether a participant was in-state or out-of-state were identified and it was verified that the demographics of the sample adequately represented the demographics of the population.

Of the 20 individuals selected, 17 were able to participate in the interviews. Participants were provided pseudonyms ensure confidentiality.

Oral interviews

The interview format was semi-structured with 16 predetermined questions that were followed up with probing questions (see Appendix E for the interview template). Semi-structured interviews are a popular research tool for several reasons: The questions can be prepared ahead of time, the format allows participants freedom to express their views in their own terms, and they allow for clarification and further questioning by the researcher (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Individual interviews are one of the most widely used methods in qualitative research (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). Semi-structured, individual interviews were selected as a good fit for this study for their ability to provide reliable, comparable qualitative data (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Protocols have been shown to be an effective tool for keeping the interviewer focused on the topic and main themes of the interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Therefore this study employed a semi-structured interview approach with 16 open-ended questions (Hatch, 2002).

Individual interviews were conducted in person or over the phone, depending on the preference of the participant. All of the participants were given a Form C – Interview Consent Form according to IRP protocol (See Appendix E for the Informed Consent Form). All interviews were audio recorded with the participant's verbal consent. Interviews length averaged approximately 15 minutes with a range of 8-21 minutes. Upon the conclusion of each interview, a memo was written identifying unique characteristics, possible themes, and answers of particular relevance to the research questions.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data in this study consisted of opened-ended survey responses and semi-structured interviews. These data were analyzed using constant comparative and triangulation methods. Through the constant comparative method (CCM), the data were examined and revisited repeatedly to identify commonalities and differences in reasons, attitudes, and perspectives related to mandatory internships as well as reveal larger patterns and themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). CCM was specifically used in this study to make comparisons within each interview, between interviews, and between the interviews and open-ended survey responses (Boeije, 2002). The main goal of using CCM in this study was to discern conceptual similarities, distinguish categories for coding, and discover patterns (Tesch, 2013). The CCM was also selected because it has been shown to increase the internal validity of the findings (Boeije, 2002).

Triangulation was used in this study when interpreting and reconciling the multiple data sources (survey data and interview data) to develop a comprehensive understanding of the research subject (Patton, 1999). Triangulation is also a strategy often used in qualitative research to check, establish, and increase validity (Patton, 1999; Jonsen & Jehn, 2009; Kirk and Miller, 1986). Triangulation uses multiple data points and analysis methods to generate findings and where findings from different sources converge, triangulation identifies this as evidence of stronger support for the findings (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Olson, McAllister, Grinnell, Walters, & Appunn, 2016). Triangulation was used in this study to analyze the survey and interview data and inform the discussion of the results. It was selected as a method because it has been shown to increase the trustworthiness and defensibility of a study (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009).

The interviews were initially transcribed using NoNotes transcriptions service. The transcribed interviews were then compared to audio files and corrected to ensure accuracy. The final transcribed interviews and memos were then open coded by hand, line by line, to allow for specific yet efficient coding. The code labels consisted of words that seemed to best describe the information (Creswell, 2007). Open coding involved making comparisons between data and repeatedly re-evaluating if the existing codes fit the data or if additional codes were necessary (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The transcribed interviews, interview memos, hand codes, and responses to open-ended survey questions were then uploaded and analyzed using NVivo software. NVivo is a tool used in qualitative research to organize, code, and analyze data (QSR International, 2011). The perspective gained from hand coding was used to inform how to organize and code the entire dataset via NVivo.

Analysis the entire dataset with NVivo was a multistep process. First statements, sentences, and quotes from each data source were highlighted and coded based on the codes developed during the initial hand coding. During this process new codes were identified which led to a review of the entire dataset according to the new codes. Next, axial coding - the process of identifying relationships among open codes, was used to create categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). These categories were condensed into smaller, more interpretive categories which in turn revealed larger themes (Creswell, 2007). Emerging themes were noted and recorded in a memo to help shape the presentation of the data analysis (Creswell, 2007).

Next, the interview data were grouped by interview question and coding was checked to ensure consistency. Finally, the entire data set was copied and reorganized

according to each research question (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Final analysis consisted of identifying themes and presenting the data in text and/or table format as necessary according to each research question (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The goal of presenting the data was to describe the essence of the data and provide verbatim examples of thoughts, experiences, and opinions (Moustakas, 1994). All statements presented in the results were identified by their source (interview) for interview data and (survey). Tables were used when a visual presentation of the diversity and the categories identified was appropriate (Moustakas, 1994). The analysis for each research question was as follows.

Research Question 1:

To what extent do students who have been required to complete an internship view it as beneficial? Why or why not.

To gain a more in-depth understanding into whether students who have been required to complete an internship view the experience as beneficial, interview and open-ended survey question data were analyzed. Interview data regarding what students gained from their internship, their primary reason for going on an internship, how their internship experience affected their career were analyzed. Open-ended responses related to why participants did or did not think that an internship should be required of every student were also analyzed. Results from both datasets were combined and analyzed together to identify existing themes.

Research Question 2:

To what extent do students who have been required to complete an internship believe other students should also be required to do one? Why or why not.

To understand the rationale behind whether students who have been required to complete an internship believe other students should also be required to complete one, overall interview data and data regarding their view of the mandatory internship policy; the primary reason why they participated in their internship; what they gained from their mandatory internship; whether or not they would have still gained the same things had it not been required; the effects of the required assignments; whether or not they would require an internship if they were in charge of the program; and whether or not they think that students should be allowed to test out of the internship was analyzed. Open-ended responses for why they did or did not think that an internship should be required of every student were also analyzed.

Research Question 3:

To what extent does a student's primary reason for going on an internship correlate with their level of satisfaction with the experience.

To evaluate the relationship between the reason that students went on internship and their level of satisfaction with the experience, overall interview data (which consisted of both student who would have participated in an internship even if it was not required and those who participated to some degree because it was required) and data regarding if participants thought they would have still gotten their perceived benefits had the internship not been required, how the assignments required for the internship effected it and their observations of other student's perceptions on the mandatory internship policy was analyzed. Open-ended responses for why they did or did not think that an internship should be required of every student were also analyzed.

Research Question 4:

In what ways does length of time since internship completion influence students' perception of the benefits they gained from an internship (e.g. right after they complete it, years after completing it, etc.)?

To evaluate the relationship between students' perception of the benefits they gained from their internship and the amount of time that has passed since completing it, overall interview data and open-ended responses for why they did or did not think that an internship should be required of every student was analyzed.

Role of the Researcher

A mixed-methods study, the combined investigation of a situation or problem in order to generate new knowledge or validate existing knowledge, is the result of a researcher's interest in a particular problem or topic (Moustakas, 1994). Often the researcher's own excitement and curiosity are the driving force of a research project and their personal interest in the subject helps focus a study (Moustakas, 1994). However, researchers must be aware that their background and personal experience will shape their interpretations and acknowledge how their interpretations will be influenced by their personal, cultural, and historical experiences (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Investigators must strive to set aside their own experiences to gain an unbiased perspective of the phenomenon of interest and to be transparent in their research (Moustakas, 1994).

Credentials of the researcher

As the researcher in this study, my interest in internships is personally and professionally based. I participated in numerous internships as a student that shaped my career and life decisions. I have coordinated, recruited, assessed, and supervised more than a thousand internships for undergraduate students throughout my fifteen-year career

as a faculty member at three different higher education institutions. I have worked closely with employers to establish, monitor, and improve internship experiences. I have been asked to train and educate businesses, faculty, and students on various topics related to internships. I have worked with internships of varying types, lengths, and structures. My extensive experience with internships has led to my interest in experiential education, has inspired my pursuit of a doctoral degree, and is at the heart of my dissertation research.

To imply that my own experience with internships will in no way impact this study would be unreasonable. Therefore, I must address how my own biases will be controlled. Attempts to minimize my personal bias began with including other professionals in the design of the survey instruments and the means of communicating with potential participants. At each step in the construction of the survey instruments and the design of the study, I sought input from others, concluding with a pilot study to gather final feedback on the instrument design.

Minimizing researcher bias in the survey design

The survey developed for this study was based on existing research surrounding internships and was edited by my doctoral committee as well as by a faculty member in the equine department. A pilot study was administered on seven students, one outside professional and one colleague. The students in the pilot study consisted of four students participating in an industry specific internship program that included students from multiple higher education institutions. These students were selected to represent students participating in an equine internship and three students from the Hospitality Management & Tourism program at the same land grant institution where the study was conducted who were selected to represent students from a program that also requires an internship.

The outside professional in the pilot study was an equine internship coordinator at another institution and the colleague was the Director of Undergraduate Studies for the degree being studied. The purpose of the pilot study was to gather student feedback on the length of the survey and the clarity and wording of the questions. All of the feedback that was gathered led to the following changes:

1. The answer format for three questions was changed to increase readability based on feedback that those questions were confusing to the participant;
2. A gender identification question was added to the demographic section based on the suggestion that gender data would be helpful in determining if the study sample was representative of the population; and
3. The style and formatting were adapted in several questions to improve clarity based on feedback that the layout of some of the questions hindered rather than helped the flow of the survey.

Minimizing researcher bias in the oral interview design

The semi-formal interview protocol used in the second phase of this study was informed by the research questions, previous internship-related studies, and the survey. Care was taken to ask open-ended questions that were not worded in a leading manner. The interviews were conducted in a location chosen by the participant. I conducted the interviews, which was both a strength and a weakness of the study.

Not only the participants needed to be protected from my personal biases, but the interview questions had to be designed in as neutral a manner as possible. Outside perspective on both the survey and the interview protocol was imperative to the rigor of this study. Consequently, the survey and the interview protocol were evaluated, critiqued,

and edited by both my committee and the RedCap survey design team. The survey instrument and the interview protocol were subject to a pilot test with a group of college students to gain their feedback. The students who performed the pilot test were currently on an internship and therefore familiar with the program being studied. Since they would not have completed their internship by the time the survey was administered they were not part of the target population.

Students selected for the qualitative interviews (see Methods) included those who volunteered to participate. Making participation voluntary may have helped mitigate, if not completely eliminate, feelings of obligation that students may have felt because of their relationship with me.

Regardless, there are still advantages and disadvantages of me conducting the one-on-one interviews. The advantages have been mentioned above with regard to student familiarity with me. This is important because one of the elements that produces quality data from interviews is the rapport between the interviewer and the person being interviewed. But the main disadvantage of me being the person conducting the interviews is the potential for social bias (respondents giving answers they think I want to hear or not giving answers they do not think I want to hear). Although this type of bias cannot be eliminated completely, it can be controlled and accounted for. A letter of consent (as mentioned above) along with an introduction at the beginning of the interview explicitly outlining the survey's intended purpose and scope helped address this bias. Emphasis was placed on gathering unbiased responses and emphasizing the importance of honest responses.

Advantages of the role of coordinator/researcher

There are advantages and disadvantages to my role as both the internship coordinator and the primary investigator in this study that cannot be overlooked. One obvious advantage is my ease of access to the database of proposed subjects. This database - which includes all of the identifiable information for each student's internship (site, location, supervisor, type of work, etc.) as well as all of their contact information (email, phone number, address, etc.) - is managed and maintained by me, making accessibility in this case easy.

Another advantage is my familiarity and existing rapport with the participants in this study. Rapport is one of the first things a researcher needs to establish when conducting interviews (Schultz & Erickson, 1982). Because I have coordinated all of the internships for this population, I have established, at the very minimum, a working relationship with each student. Through the existing internship assessment process, I have already sought feedback related to their internship experience through both a survey and a reflective paper. The existing relationship has built a rapport of feedback and soliciting opinions related to internships. Rapport specific to this study and my role as the researcher was established by explaining the study and my role as a researcher for my dissertation separate from my role as a faculty member before starting the interview.

Because of my role and experience with them, the students in this population were already accustomed to sharing their thoughts and experiences with me and were prepared for me to request feedback. This established relationship may have lead to increased participation in the study since students already knew who I was when I contacted them to request their participation in this study. The established rapport may also have improved the interview quality (Weiss, 1995).

Disadvantages of the role of researcher/coordinator

Such advantages do not come without disadvantages, however. One of the most significant obstacles to overcome was controlling my own biases. Because the research area and target population were so intricately connected to my position at UK, care was taken to acknowledge and attempt to eliminate any influence and any biases I may have had on data collection and analysis. This was addressed in several ways. First, although the population was familiar with me in regards to sharing their thoughts as they related to internships, it was important for them to know that their survey responses were anonymous and not a part of the interviews. Second, it was important for me to remind them that their interview responses were confidential but that those who agreed to participate in oral interviews knowingly set aside anonymity meaning that they were willing for me to know who they were and their thoughts related to internships. Finally, interview participants were notified in their survey participation letter and reminded at the beginning of their interview that this study was related to my dissertation and not the program in an attempt to avoid any social bias (i.e., where responses are influenced by what respondents may think I want to hear).

Expanding the audiences for the research results

It was also important that the participants knew there were implications related to the study other than my professional curiosity. This was explained in the consent letter that informed respondents that the results of the study would be published in the school newsletter, the college research publication, and possibly other publications.

To date, I have participated in numerous internships as an undergraduate student, coordinated internships at three different higher education institutions, studied internship

research, and supervised interns both in an academic and business environments. The insight gained from each unique perspective helped shape this study. Understanding and experiencing different viewpoints related to internships will help me develop better research instruments, interpret findings and apply results. Thus, while my personal connection to this study and interest in internships is something to be considered and must be addressed, it could also be considered a strength.

Trustworthiness of the study

The trustworthiness of this study is based on the instruments used and their subsequent analysis. The initial step to ensure trustworthiness began with the survey development. The survey design was informed by current research and existing studies. It was assessed by my dissertation committee and faculty in the same field. A pilot study was also administered to students with similar demographics to those in the target population. The pilot study was not only helpful in shaping the survey, but Marshall and Rossman (2006) suggest that pilot work also helps one understand herself as a researcher. The cumulative feedback was evaluated and the format, length, and wording adapted accordingly.

Survey instrument design

The survey used in this study was also evaluated by the dissertation committee and faculty in the equine department. Every student in the target population was sent the survey and encouraged to participate. The validity of the survey was influenced by the variety of feedback from professionals and reliability was sought through by utilizing three different formats to measure the construct of interest – the primary reason that students participated in their internship.

Oral interview design

Upon reviewing the survey data, the interview protocol was further adapted based on emerging themes in preliminary results and the open-ended survey responses. Just as quantitative research must exhibit evidence of methodological rigor, qualitative research must also establish credibility (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The mixed-method design of this study was selected to increase its trustworthiness as it has been shown that seeking different types of data can help overcome the limitations of any one type of instrument (Flick & Gibbs, 2007). Trustworthiness in qualitative research utilizes credibility, authenticity, transferability, and confirmability as counterparts to the validity and reliability of quantitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Care was taken to ensure that neutrally worded questions were used in the oral interview. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and corrected to ensure accuracy. Analysis of the interview data was combined with analysis of the open-ended survey question data and both were compared to the survey data. Triangulation is a procedure used to increase trustworthiness by cross referencing multiple and different sources of information to identify themes or categories in a study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This study incorporated triangulation by converging data from the survey with data from the interviews and quantitative data from the survey. Purposeful sampling was also utilized. Purposeful sampling is commonly used in qualitative research to identify and select information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015). In this study care was taken to select interview participants which were representative of the range of opinions and demographics found among survey participants.

Regardless of all the effort made to ensure the trustworthiness of this study, there exists the reality that all data presented are partially based on participant's perspectives and partially based on the researcher's interpretations (Creswell & Clark, 2007). In the interest of establishing validity, reflexivity – the self-disclosure of assumption, beliefs, and biases – is often utilized (Creswell & Miller, 2000). This transparency is critical to establishing trustworthiness. Researchers must inform the reader by addressing their personal biases during each stage of the process from development to administration to analysis to address how trustworthiness was established (Bazeley, 2013).

Limitations of Study

No research is without its limitation, most of which are directly related to the methods employed. This study was affected by the inherent limitations associated with survey research. Survey research aims to provide an accurate representation of a broader population but is subject to sampling error, sample bias, and non-sampling bias (Blair, Czaja, & Blair, 2013). Unless everyone in the population completes the survey, the data is not entirely representative of every existing perspective. This study was based on a 25.9% response rate. Participants in the survey were not chosen at random but instead chose to participate, so there exists self-selection bias (Hudson, Seah, Hite, & Haab, 2004). It is also possible that participants did not understand the questions that were asked (comprehension error), did not know the answer but still gave an answer (knowledge error), or gave an answer that was deemed socially desirable (reporting error) (Blair, et al., 2013).

Interview data is also limited. Through interviews participants can only report their perception and perceptions are subject to distortion based on emotion, personal bias,

and/or lack of awareness (Patton, 1980). Both interview and survey data are subject to recall error and self-serving biases (Patton, 1980). Interview and open-ended survey responses are all subject to coding error where the researcher misinterpreted the answer or assigned the wrong code (Blair, et al., 2013). All interpretations of this study are through the lens of the researcher, who is subject to her own personal biases (Bazely, 2013).

Summary

Internships are a standard component to many degree options at colleges and universities, although there is significant variation in how these experiences are implemented, monitored, and evaluated. Currently, research is almost exclusively based on voluntary experiences, focuses overwhelmingly on input from Business majors, and is overly reliant on anecdotal information. This study adds to the body of research on internships by examining the results of internships that are required.

This study attempted to understand student perspectives related to the policy of mandatory internships. It utilized a mixed-method approach to produce quantitative and qualitative data to inform the research questions of interest. A survey was administered to all students who have participated in a required internship and purposeful sampling was used to select the oral interview participants. Statistical analysis, themes, coding, the constant comparative method and triangulation were utilized to analyze data. The results of the data analysis are presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

This research study has focused on the effects of mandatory internships in an equine science program. The research questions have attempted to address the void in the literature that has predominantly studied voluntary internships in other fields and has relied primarily on anecdotal information. Using a survey approach and follow-up interviews for a representative sample of respondents, the research questions were evaluated.

Both the survey and the qualitative data are presented in this chapter as they relate to each research question. First, the descriptive statistics of the survey participants are presented. Second, survey responses and statistical analysis for each research question are presented. Third, the qualitative data related to each overarching research question is presented. For the qualitative portion of the study, the researcher analyzed responses to open-ended survey questions and conducted follow-up interviews with 17 of the 97 respondents. The interview responses are identified by their pseudo names and labeled 'interview' while survey responses (which were anonymous) are simply labeled 'survey'.

Survey Data

Descriptive Statistics

The total number of individuals invited to participate in this study was 374; 97 people responded. It was determined that a sample size of 77 was necessary in order to achieve a 95% confidence level. The actual number of survey participants was 97, yielding a response rate of 25.9%. A rate consistent with research that reports a typical range of 25-30% for survey research using email as the delivery method (Yun & Trumbo,

2000). The survey response rate is also consistent with research summarizing response rates for surveys that do not offer incentives (Fincham, 2008).

Surveys were considered “Complete” if the respondent participated to the end of the survey and “Incomplete” if the respondent stopped participating before the end of the survey. There were no “Incomplete” surveys in this study. A “Complete” survey did not necessarily mean that all of the questions were answered, but it indicates that respondent participated to the end of the survey where they indicated if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview.

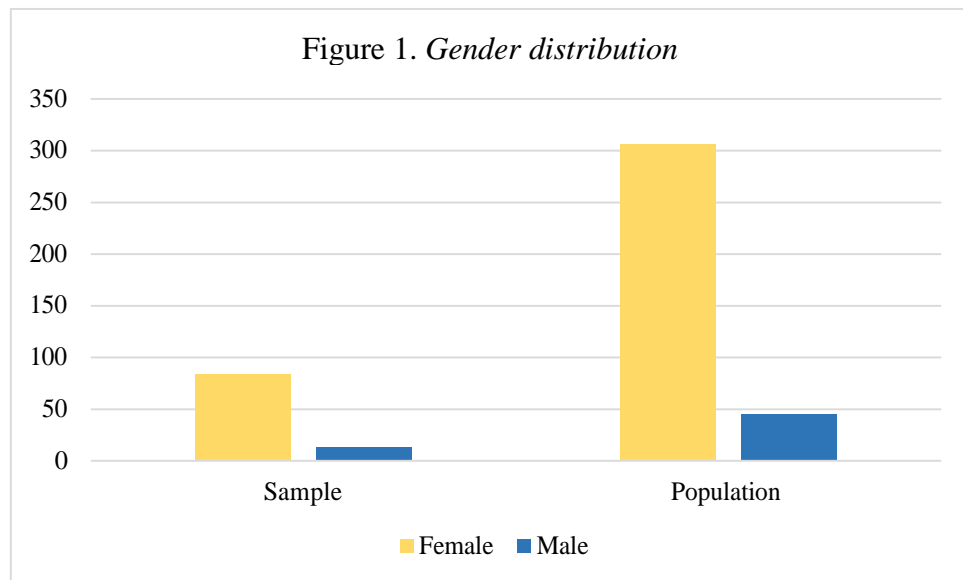
Participant descriptive demographics are included in Table 1.

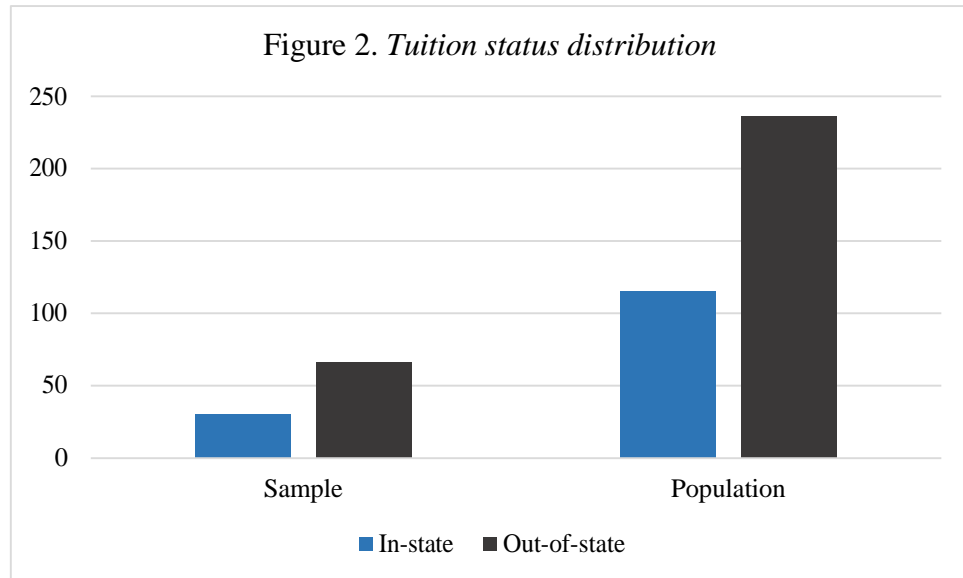
Table 1

Description of Participants Characteristics

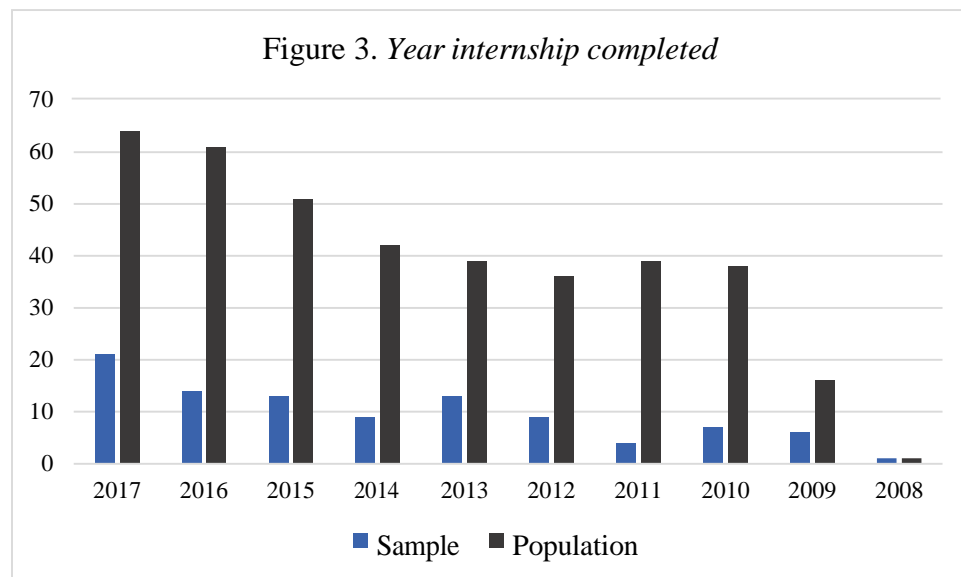
| Variable name | Group | Number | % |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------|-------|
| Gender | Female | 84 | 86.6% |
| | Male | 13 | 13.4% |
| Status | Student | 26 | 26.8% |
| | Alumni | 71 | 73.2% |
| Tuition status | In state | 30 | 30.9% |
| | Out of state | 66 | 68.0% |
| Year completed internship | 2008 | 1 | 1.0% |
| | 2009 | 6 | 6.2% |
| | 2010 | 7 | 7.2% |
| | 2011 | 4 | 4.1% |
| | 2012 | 9 | 9.3% |
| | 2013 | 13 | 13.4% |
| | 2014 | 9 | 9.3% |
| | 2015 | 13 | 13.4% |
| | 2016 | 14 | 14.4% |
| | 2017 | 21 | 21.6% |
| Years of previous equine experience | 2 or less | 24 | 24.7% |
| | 3-5 | 29 | 39.7% |
| | 6-8 | 21 | 21.6% |
| | 9 or more | 24 | 24.7% |
| Type of internship | Thoroughbred - Hands-on | 18 | 18.6% |
| | Thoroughbred - Office | 16 | 16.5% |
| | Sport Horse - Hands-on | 8 | 8.2% |
| | Sport Horse - Office | 2 | 2.1% |
| | Western - Hands-on | 4 | 4.1% |
| | Western - Office | 0 | 0.0% |
| | Veterinary - Hands-on | 12 | 12.4% |
| | Veterinary - Office | 2 | 2.1% |
| | Breed/Discipline Assoc. - Office | 3 | 3.1% |
| | Retraining/Re-homing | 4 | 4.1% |
| | Therapeutic/Rehabilitation | 0 | 0.0% |
| | Equine Assisted Therapy | 4 | 4.1% |
| | Research | 7 | 7.2% |
| | Extension | 3 | 3.1% |
| | Teaching | 2 | 2.1% |
| | Boarding Facility | 2 | 2.1% |
| | Lessons | 1 | 1.0% |
| | Other | 9 | 9.3% |

Females were overrepresented in this sample (86.6%, n=84) compared to males (13.4%, n=13) which is consistent with the ratio of females (87.2%, N=306) to males (12.8%, N=45) in the population (See Figure 1). Those who had graduated with a BS degree from the program being studied comprised a large majority of the sample (73.2%, n=71) compared to those who were still students (26.8%, n=26). Of the current students, fewer were in-state (11.5%, n=3) than out-of-state (88.5%, n=23), which was consistent with the distribution among alumni where fewer had been in-state students (38.6%, n=27) than out-of-state (61.4%, n=43) and the distribution in the population (32.8%, N=115 in-state; 67.3%, N=236 out-of-state) (See Figure 2). The amount of previous equine-related work experience respondents had prior to their internship varied from less than two years (24.7%, n=24), to between three and five years (29.9%, n=29), to between six and eight years (21.6%, n=21), to nine or more years (24.7%, n=24).

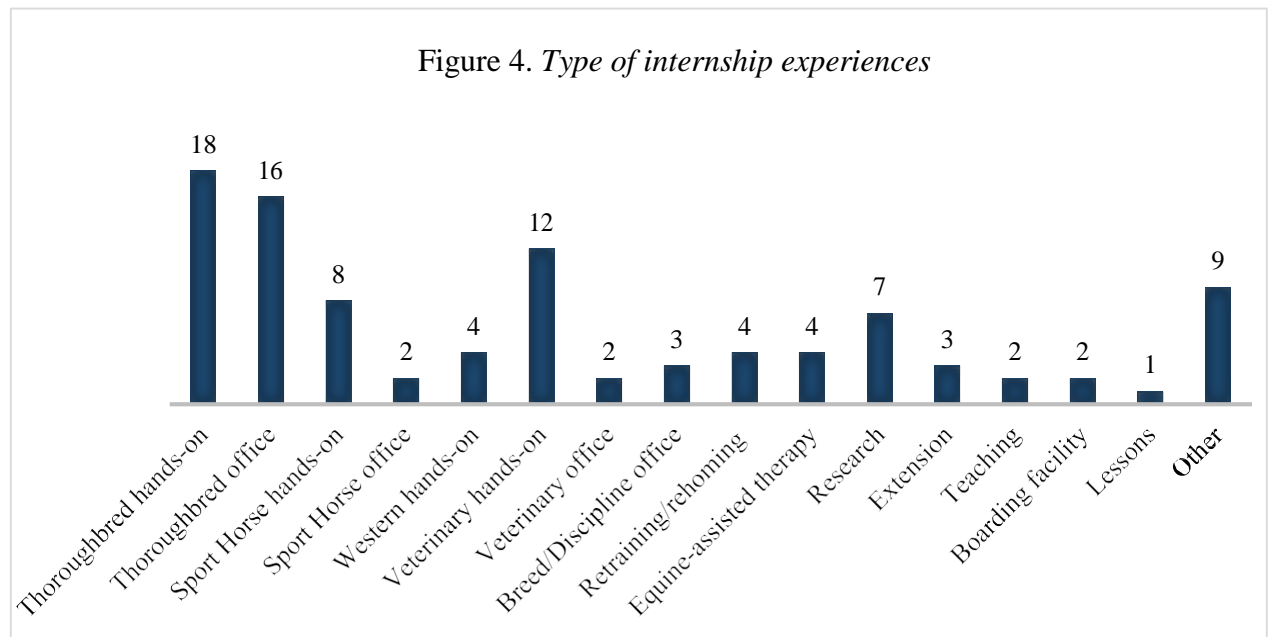




The mandatory internship policy was approved in 2007 and implemented in 2008 to present. The participants in this study completed their internships between 2008 and 2017; the majority were completed in 2017 (21.6%, n=21), followed by 2016 (14.4%, n=14), 2015 (13.4%, n=13), 2014 (9.3%, n=9), 2013 (13.4%, n=13), 2012 (9.3%, n=9), 2011 (4.1%, n=4), 2010 (7.2%, n=7), 2009 (6.2%, n=6), and 2008 (1%, n=1). A comparison of the distribution of the year of internship completion in the sample compared to the population is shown in Figure 3.



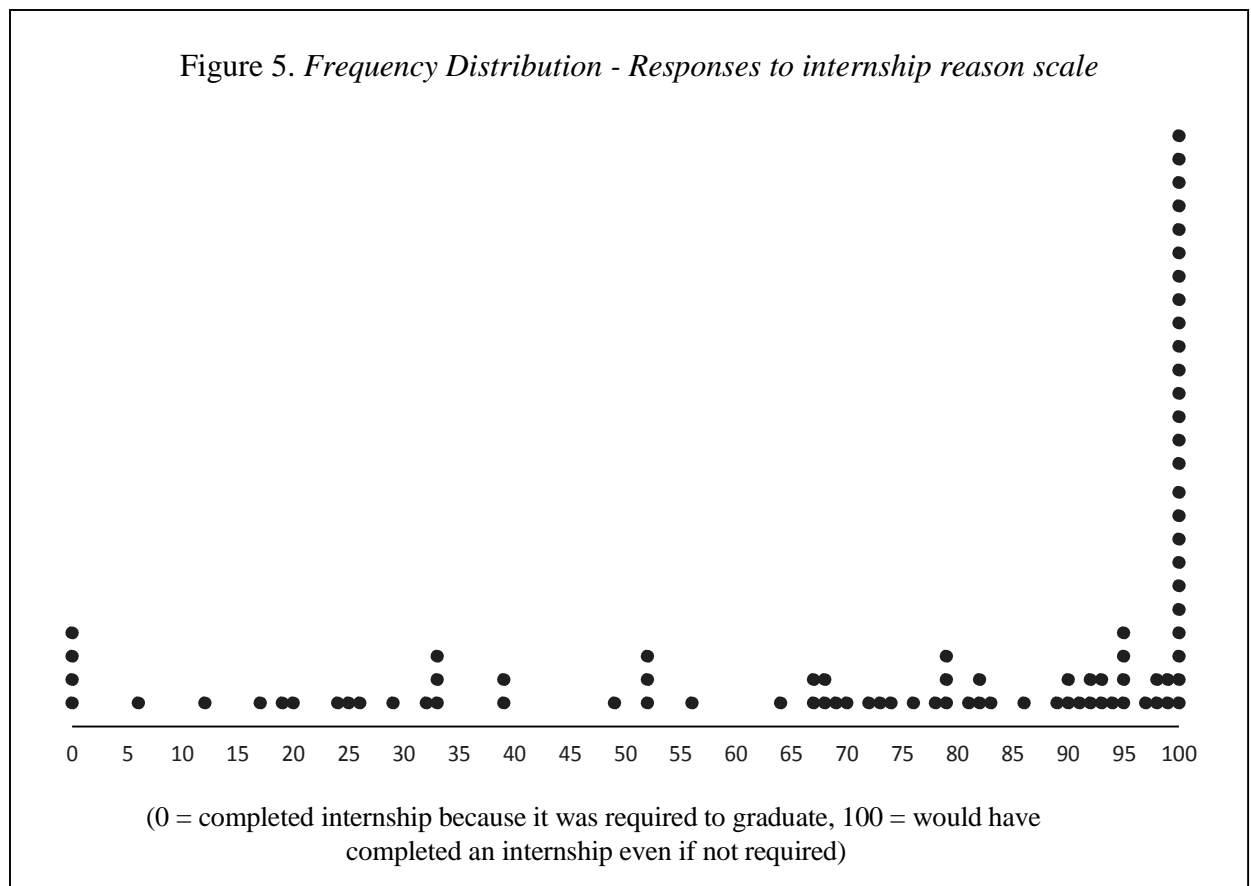
The type of internship experiences that made up the sample in this study are presented in Figure 4.



Groups

To evaluate research questions 2a, 3, 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, and 3e regarding the primary reason students participated in an internship participants of the study were sorted into two groups. The groups consisted of those who would have completed an internship even if it had not been required (Group 1) and those who completed it to primarily because it was required (Group 2). Survey participants were identified as Group 1 or Group 2 based on their responses to the reason scale and reason rank questions. Scores on the reason scale ranged from 0-100 (0 = they completed their internship because it was required to

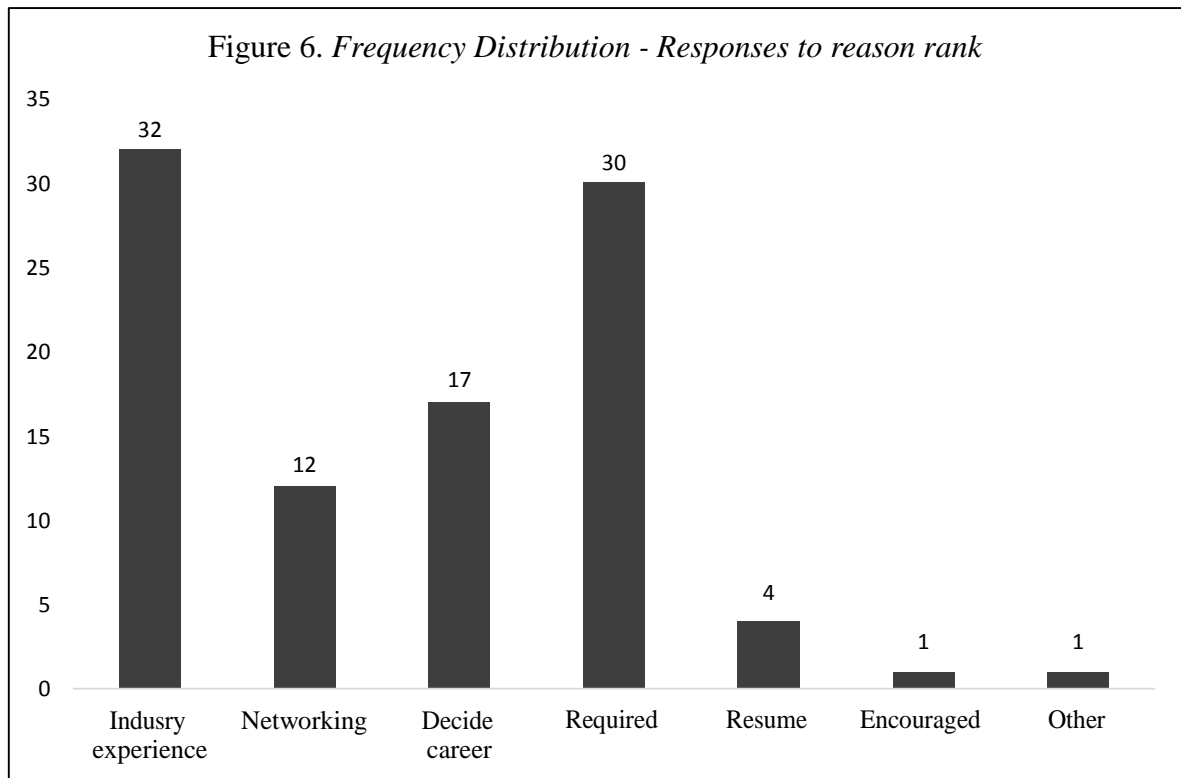
graduate and 100 = they would have completed their internship even if it was not required). Responses were analyzed visually and numerically (*median* = 84.5, *mode* = 100). (See Figure 5 for the frequency distribution of reason scale responses).



With respect to the overarching purpose of this study (to evaluate mandatory internships) and more specifically research questions 2a, 3, 3a, 3b, 3c, and 3d (examining the influence of the primary reason students completed their internship), the primary goal of establishing the two groups was to identify and isolate the students who would have completed an internship even if it had not been required from students who completed it to some degree because it was required. After a visual and numerical analysis of the data,

a threshold of 95 on the reason scale was selected to differentiate the two groups (Group 1 ≥ 95 = students who would have completed an internship even if it was not required, Group 2 ≤ 94 = students who completed an internship to some degree because it was required). This threshold aligned with one of the overarching goals of this study to separate out students who would have completed an internship had it not been required from those who were influenced to some degree by the requirement. The threshold of 95 was chosen because it captured all of the students who reported that they were not at all influenced by the requirement, while still allowing for a small amount of leniency considering responses were on a 100-point scale.

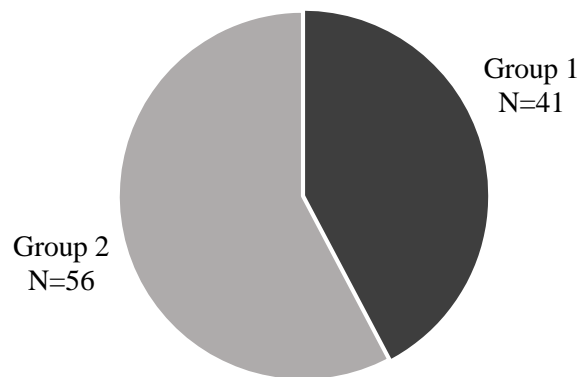
For participants who did not answer the internship reason scale question, responses for reason ranking were used to identify them as Group 1 or Group 2. The reason ranking question asked participants to identify the most important reason why they participated in their internship. Possible responses included 1) they wanted to gain industry experience; 2) they wanted to build their network; 3) they were trying to decide what they wanted to do when they graduate; 4) it was required to graduate; 5) they wanted to strengthen their resume; 6) they were encouraged to do an internship by someone such as an advisor, professor, parent, etc.; 7) other (open ended) (See Figure 6 for the frequency distribution of responses).



To test if there was a relationship between responses to the reason scale question and responses on the reason rank question, and thus whether they were likely measuring the construct of interest, the primary reason for going on internship, a Chi-square test was run using a threshold of 95 for the reason scale and a threshold of 4 for the reason rank. This test was selected to determine the correlation between participants who selected reason 4 and a score 94 or less on the reason scale. Results revealed a strong, statistically significant correlation $\chi^2(1, N = 97) = 11.97, p = 0.0005$. All but one of the participants who selected reason 4 (required) also had a score at or below 94 on the reason scale. The only participant that did not gave a reason scale response of 100, which was an atypical score and could indicate an item response error. Nonetheless, this participant was still included in the analysis and grouped according to the stated criterion.

Upon identifying the two groups, Group 1 (N = 41) consisted of participants who, by their own assessment, would have completed an internship even if they were not required to do so. These students were identified by having a score ≥ 95 on the reason scale and/or choosing option 1 (industry experience), 2 (networking), 3 (decide career), 5 (resume), 6 (encouraged), or 7 (other) on the reason ranking question. Group 2 (N = 56) consisted of students who, by their own assessment, completed their internship to some degree because it was required. Group 2 was identified as students who answered ≤ 94 on the reason scale and/or option 4 on the reason ranking. The proportion of survey participants by group is shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7. *Survey Participants by Group*



Interview Data

Using the criteria outlined in Chapter 3 a purposeful sample was identified for the follow-up interviews. Results of the 17 individuals who completed the interviews as they relate to each criterion used to build a purposeful sample are presented in Tables 2-6.

Table 2

Characteristics of Interview Participants - Research Question 1

| | How beneficial internship | | | | Internship contributed to job | | |
|---------|---------------------------|-----------------|-------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| | <u>Not</u> | <u>Somewhat</u> | <u>Very</u> | <u>Extremely</u> | <u>None</u> | <u>Somewhat</u> | <u>Considerably</u> |
| Amy | | | | x | | | x |
| Bridget | | | | x | | | x |
| Brian | | | | x | | | |
| Carrie | | x | | | x | | |
| Daniel | | | | x | x | | |
| Ellie | | | | x | | x | |
| Eric | | x | | | | x | |
| Karen | | | | x | | x | |
| Heather | | | | x | | | x |
| Irene | | | | x | x | | |
| Jeff | | | | x | x | x | |
| Kim | | x | | | | x | |
| Kacie | | | x | | x | | |
| Maggie | | | | x | | | x |
| Roger | | | x | | x | | x |
| Amanda | | | | x | | | x |
| Tabitha | | | x | | | | |

Table 3

Characteristics of Interview Participants - Research Question 2

| | View of required internship policy | | | |
|---------|------------------------------------|----------|-------|-------------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| Amy | | | | x |
| Bridget | | | x | |
| Brian | | | x | |
| Carrie | | | x | |
| Daniel | | | | x |
| Ellie | | | | x |
| Eric | | | | x |
| Karen | | | | x |
| Heather | | | | x |
| Irene | | | | x |
| Jeff | | | | x |
| Kim | | | | x |
| Kacie | | | x | |
| Maggie | | | | x |
| Roger | | | | x |
| Amanda | | | | x |
| Tabitha | | | | x |

Table 4

Characteristics of Interview Participants - Research Question 3

| Satisfaction with internship experience | | | | | |
|---|---------------------|-------------|---|-----------|-------------------|
| | Very unsatisfied | Unsatisfied | Neither Satisfied nor unsatisfied | Satisfied | Very Satisfied |
| Amy | | | | x | |
| Bridget | | | | | x |
| Brian | | | x | | |
| Carrie | | | | x | |
| Daniel | | | | | x |
| Ellie | | | | | x |
| Eric | | | | x | |
| Karen | | | | | x |
| Heather | x | | | | |
| Irene | | | | | |
| Jeff | | | | | x |
| Kim | | x | | | |
| Kacie | | | | x | |
| Maggie | | | | | x |
| Roger | x | | | | |
| Amanda | | | | | x |
| Tabitha | | | | | |

Table 5

Characteristics of Interview Participants - Research Question 4

| | Years since completing internship | | |
|---------|-----------------------------------|---------|--------------|
| | ≤ 2 yrs | 3-6 yrs | ≥ 7 yrs |
| Amy | x | | |
| Bridget | | x | |
| Brian | x | | |
| Carrie | | x | |
| Daniel | x | | |
| Ellie | | x | |
| Eric | | | x |
| Karen | | | x |
| Heather | x | | |
| Irene | x | | |
| Jeff | | | x |
| Kim | | x | |
| Kacie | | x | |
| Maggie | | x | |
| Roger | | | x |
| Amanda | | x | |
| Tabitha | x | | |

Table 6

Demographics of Interview Participants

| | Gender | | Student Status | | Previous equine experience | | | Supervisor investment in internship | | | | | Reason Scale |
|---------|--------|--------|----------------|--------------|----------------------------|---------|---------|-------------------------------------|----------|----------|------|------------|--------------|
| | Male | Female | In-state | Out-of-state | 0-2 yrs | 3-6 yrs | 7-9 yrs | None | Slightly | Somewhat | Very | Completely | |
| Amy | | x | x | | x | | | | | | x | | 100 |
| Bridget | | x | | x | x | | | | | | x | | 100 |
| Brian | x | | | x | x | | | x | | | | | 79 |
| Carrie | | x | | x | | | x | | | | x | | 32 |
| Daniel | x | | x | | | | x | | | | | x | |
| Ellie | | x | | x | x | | | | | x | | | 98 |
| Eric | x | | | x | | | x | | | | | x | 98 |
| Karen | | x | x | | x | | | | | | | x | 100 |
| Heather | | x | x | | x | | | | | | | x | 99 |
| Irene | | x | | x | | | x | | | x | | | 68 |
| Jeff | x | | | x | | | x | | | | x | | 91 |
| Kim | | x | x | | | x | | | x | | | | 19 |
| Kacie | | x | x | | x | | | | | x | | | 72 |
| Maggie | | x | | x | | x | | | | | | x | 100 |
| Roger | x | | x | | | x | | | | | x | | 67 |
| Amanda | | x | | x | | | x | | | | | x | |
| Tabitha | | x | | x | x | | | | | | | x | 100 |

Research Question 1:

To what extent do students who have been required to complete an internship view it as beneficial? Why or why not.

Quantitative Data

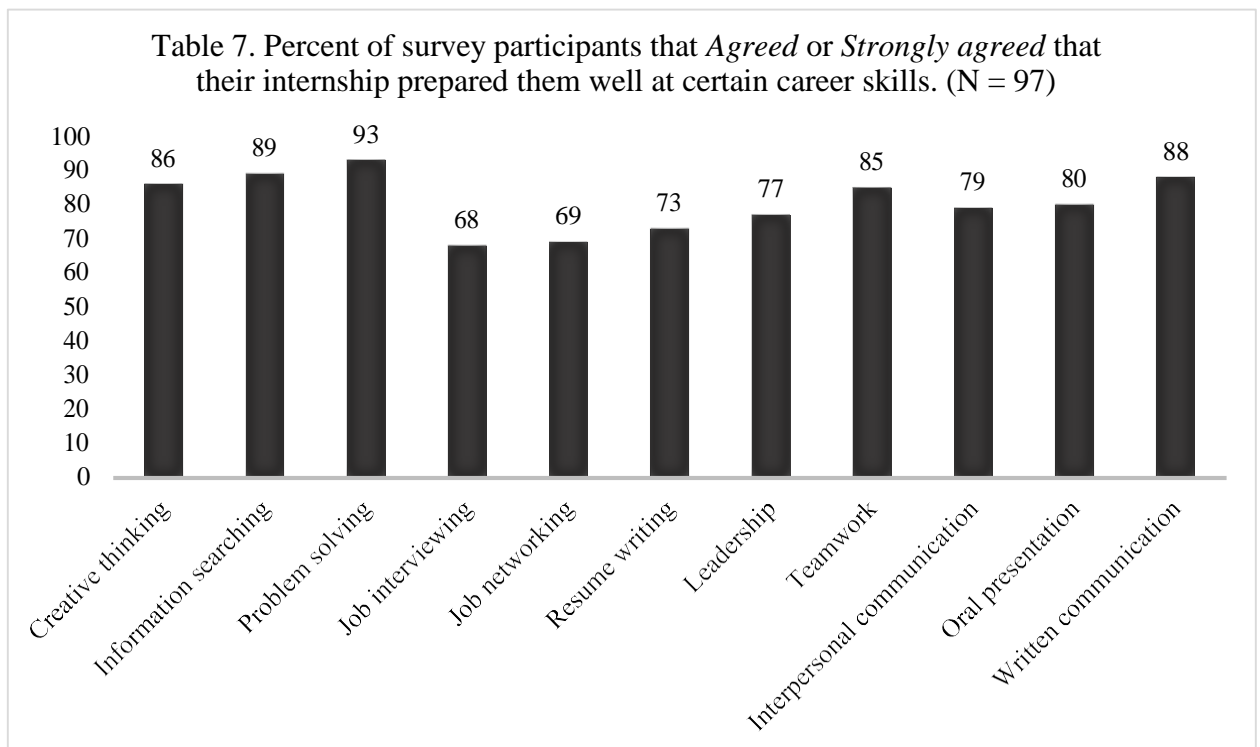
Thirty-eight percent of survey participants identified their internship as being *Extremely beneficial*, 37% as *Very beneficial*, and 23% as *Somewhat beneficial*, and only 2% viewed their internship as being *Not beneficial* (N = 97).

Research Question 1a: How satisfied are students who have completed a mandatory internship with the experience?

Among students who participated in a mandatory internship, 49% reported feeling *Very satisfied* with the experience, 39% were *Satisfied*, and 6% felt *Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied*, 2% were *Unsatisfied* and 4% were *Very unsatisfied* (N = 71).

Research Question 1b: How well did students who participated in a mandatory internship feel it prepared them for certain career skills?

The majority of students who participated in a mandatory internship *Agreed* or *Strongly agreed* that their internship prepared them well at all 11 skills measured. The percentages are given in Table 7.



Research Question 1c: Is there a difference between how well students who completed a mandatory internship felt their internship prepared them well at certain career skills compared to how well their overall undergraduate experience prepared them at the same skills?

Several statistically significant differences were found between how well students who participated in a mandatory internship felt their internship versus their overall

undergraduate experience prepared them for certain career skills. Results are listed in Table 8.

Table 8.

Chi-square analysis applied to all survey participants comparing internship preparation vs. university preparation for career skills.

| <i>Career Skills (N=97)</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>χ^2</i> | <i>p</i> |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Creative thinking | 12 | 13.26 | 0.3504 |
| Information searching | 9 | 12.15 | 0.2025 |
| Problem solving* | 9 | 19.57 | 0.0208 |
| Job interviewing* | 16 | 84.66 | <0.0001 |
| Job networking* | 12 | 41.63 | <0.0001 |
| Resume writing* | 16 | 45.20 | 0.0001 |
| Leadership** | 16 | 39.58 | 0.0009 |
| Teamwork** | 12 | 22.49 | 0.0324 |
| Interpersonal communication* | 9 | 44.4 | <0.0001 |
| Oral presentation* | 16 | 65.46 | <0.0001 |
| Written communication* | 12 | 23.39 | 0.0246 |

* *internship better prepared them*

** *university better prepared them*

All the students who completed a required internship were more likely to *Strongly agree* that their ‘internship prepared them well’ than that their “overall undergraduate experience prepared them well” at *Problem solving* $\chi^2(9, N = 97) = 19.57, p = 0.0208$, *Job interviewing* $\chi^2(16, N = 97) = 84.66=3, p = < 0.0001$, *Networking* $\chi^2(12, N = 97) = 41.63, p = < 0.0001$, *Resume writing* $\chi^2(16, N = 97) = 45.20, p = 0.0001$, *Oral presentation* $\chi^2(16, N = 97) = 65.46, p = < 0.0001$ *Interpersonal communication* $\chi^2(9, N = 97) = 44.40, p = < 0.0001$, and *Written communication* $\chi^2(12, N = 97) = 23.39, p = 0.0246$.

On the other hand, they were more likely to *Strongly agree* that their “overall undergraduate experience prepared them well” than that their “internship prepared them well” at *Teamwork* $\chi^2(12, N = 97) = 22.49, p = 0.0324$, and *Leadership* $\chi^2(16, N = 97) =$

39.58, $p = 0.0009$. There was no relationship between how participants felt the internship versus their overall undergraduate experience prepared them well at *Creative thinking* $\chi^2(12, N = 97) = 13.26, p = 0.3504$ or *Information searching* $\chi^2(9, N = 97) = 12.15, p = 0.2052$.

Qualitative Data

Nearly all of the 17 interview and 97 survey participants who had been required to complete an internship reported benefits from that internship in the interviews and open-ended survey questions. The diversity of benefits given was substantial. Fourteen categories of benefits emerged from the data. The frequency that each category was referenced can be found in Table 9.

Table 9

Overall Internship Benefits

| Category | Description | Number | % |
|--|--|--------|-------|
| Academic credit | Gained credit, experience was educational, able to fulfill different needs at same time (monetary, educational, experience, credit) | 9 | 1.8% |
| Build resume and reputation | Build resume, build reputation, gain credibility in industry | 28 | 5.6% |
| Career clarity, exposure, security and success | Decide what do and don't want to pursue for career, exposed to new/unknown careers, better prepare for careers and graduation, security of fall back plan, more realistic expectations | 77 | 15.5% |
| Developed professionalism | Developed or increased skills and attributes needed/valued in professional environment | 8 | 1.6% |
| Developed work ethic | Forced to work hard, developed work ethic, developed responsibility | 10 | 2.0% |
| Experience | Gain hands-on/real world/relevant experience - very important in industry | 102 | 20.5% |
| Future employment | Led to paid/full-time/career employment | 40 | 8.0% |
| Get out of comfort zone | Forced to do/try new experiences, try different career, exposed to unfamiliar industry aspects | 20 | 4.0% |
| Increased responsibility | Given more job responsibilities, held to higher standards, given more opportunities than regular employees | 25 | 5.0% |
| Increased industry awareness | Learned new aspects of industry, learned how much did not know | 62 | 12.4% |
| Learned new skills | Learned skills not typically learned in classroom (business, interview, job, communication, time management, transferable) | 29 | 5.8% |
| Networking | Made connections, gained references, built network in industry | 67 | 13.5% |
| Professional interpersonal relationships | Observed, learned, practiced, social, interpersonal, professional, and management relationships and politics | 14 | 2.8% |
| Took it seriously | Intern and/or supervisor took experience and/or goals more seriously | 7 | 1.4% |

Experience

Experience was the most commonly reported benefit associated with an internship. According to participants, experience was beneficial even if it was as simple as “The opportunity to work in the equine industry” (survey). The perceived value of real world experience gained in internships was referenced 37 times and often was in the context of crediting internships with providing real world experience that students couldn’t get from the classroom. As one survey respondent put it, an internship “Is one of the only ways to gain real world working experience in the horse industry, just sitting in classes learning about it won’t prepare a student for the real world.” In her interview, *Maggie* made the same point, “I mean you can’t even measure how much the internships give you as real world experience” (interview). Another survey participant stated, “Real-life work experience is vitally important for future success in the equine industry” (survey).

Students also reported significant value in the professional experience they gained from their internships. *Amanda*, when talking about the value of internships, said, “There is no better place to gain professional equine experience” (interview) and one of the survey respondents felt that “There is no better place to gain professional equine experience which is what this major aims to do” (survey). Not only did participants feel that internships offered unique experience than what could be found in the classroom, some felt that they were also different from other experiential types of learning such a study abroad focused on the equine industry. *Irene* explained the rationale for this line of thought, “I also did an equine study abroad program, and I mean, the course work was

very good, but I wouldn't say that I gained professional experience of having the independent responsibility of an internship" (interview).

The belief that hands-on experience is even more important in the equine industry than other industries was common among participants. "I think students have to do an internship because the equine industry is a hands-on industry" (interview) stated *Karen*. *Jeff* echoed this, "The real world experience is really valuable, even more valuable in the horse world" (interview). In some cases, the reported benefit of experience was more about the context of the experience than the experience itself, "The internship provides the experience in a safe, educational environment" (survey). "There is only so much you can learn in the academic world. The equine industry is so specialized that work experience is crucial to being able to be a competent industry member upon graduation" (survey).

Career clarity

Another common perceived benefit of internships was their ability to improve career clarity. Often students credited internships as an effective method of helping students decide what they "Did and didn't like in a job" (interview) *Eric* and "Deciding if a career was what they wanted to do or not" (interview) *Heather*. One student reported that their internship made them "Realize there were a few skills needed" for the career they wanted that they "Hadn't learned yet but wanted to" (interview) *Irene*. The benefit of career clarity was not limited to what career they did or did not want to pursue but also to characteristics not often considered by students such as salary: "Through the internship I was able to gain more accurate perspective of what opportunities are out there and at

what pay grade. I was better able to make informed decisions regarding my financial future” (survey).

More often than not it seemed that the highest value of the career clarity that came from internships came in the form of discovering what participants did not want to do as a career. One student reported that learning they did not want to pursue a certain career “Prevented some unhappiness in a career later” (survey). Another participant explained, “I went into my undergraduate degree wanting one career. After completing an internship, I realized that was not the career path I wanted but I found the career I want in my future!” (survey). Some participants felt an internship, “Definitely prepares you for post-graduation” (survey), saying, “It is the internship that provides the attractive hands-on experience that potential employers following graduation are seeking” (survey). Several also felt that the internship led to job security, such as *Eric* who said, “I know that I have a fall back plan for me if I was to ever get hurt” (interview).

Networking

Another commonly reported benefit was networking. Similar to experience, this benefit was often considered particularly valuable in the equine industry. For example, when discussing why the networking from her internship was so beneficial *Amanda* explained, “In the horse world I’ve always known it’s not what you know, it’s who you know” (interview). This sentiment was also reported by *Heather* who described the equine industry as, “An industry where you are who you know” (interview), and *Irene* who said, “Seeing the importance of the connections you make in the work place can be – are very, very important” (interview). Networking benefits were often described by how

they led to a career, “The most important thing is just having a relationship with people in the industry, that ultimately paved the way for me to enter it myself” (interview) *Bridget*.

Resume development

Other reported benefits such as resume building were consistent with existing research (Coco, 2000; Divine et al., 2007). As one survey respondent explained, “The internship experience gives the students valuable experiences to bring with them and put on their resume” (survey). As with networking and experience, there was a common perception that the equine industry is particularly competitive. “These students need the experience to put on their resume – the equine job market is tough and competitive!” (survey). “Experience in the equine industry is everything when it comes to finding a full-time job” (survey). Another stated, “This is an industry where many graduates are competing against people without college degrees and will need that hands-on experience to stand out!” (survey). Ellie explained this perception when making the argument of why the requirement of an internship should not be eliminated, “If that ever goes away, I don’t think it should because people need to get out there. I mean, school is great and everything but the internship adds an extra thing to your resume before you even set foot in the industry” (interview). *Roger* further explained the benefit of building a resume as it relates to credibility, “Working there gave me something to be able to put on a resume so it can get you that little bit of credibility” (interview).

Responsibility and work ethic

Some of the benefits that emerged in the data were unexpected. Several participants reported that participating in successful internships was related to responsibility and work ethic. In her interview, *Irene*, explained what resulted from being

forced to complete her internship instead of quit when things got hard, “Would I say that I gained a lot from sticking it out in terms of experience? Not. But in terms of like, self-discipline and responsibility, I think I did gain something staying with it” (interview).

Amy said that because of her internship she, “Learned to work hard and work long hours because I was doing it during school and had to be responsible for getting my work done at work and in school” (interview). One survey participant explained, “I believe an internship is something that takes a lot of responsibility on the part of the student. I takes a lot of work to get and keep a good internship and I think that is great experience for anyone” (survey). Another said, “This internship also teaches you responsibility and what it’s like to work in the field you’re considering” (survey).

Forced outside comfort zone

Another unexpected benefit of internships that was common was their ability to get students outside their comfort zone and the positive results that ensued. As one survey participant put it when explaining why an internship should be required of every student, “It’s good to get out of your comfort zone and really work in the industry” (survey). Said another, “It’s a valuable experience that makes students seek opportunities they might otherwise ignore and forces them to try new things” (survey). When explaining why she thought internships should be required, *Tabitha* said, “Sometimes people are doing something completely different than what they’re used to and I don’t think that would have happened any other way if it wasn’t like a required thing to do because it kind of pushes you to go out of your comfort zone” (interview). Some participants even thought that those that were willing to get out of their comfort zone were more successful. *Ellie* explained, “If you look at the people in the industry or the people in the program that did

internships they weren't comfortable with or were a little more out there, they've really succeeded" (interview).

Not all students felt that being forced to do new things was entirely positive however. *Roger*, who completed his internship requirement at a business at which he was already working, said, "Every now and then I kind of wish like I had gone and worked on a farm or gone and done something out of the box. But I'm glad I wasn't forced to do something different" (interview).

Interpersonal relationships

The benefit of observing and learning about the interpersonal relationships, managing people and workplace politics was a common by product. *Brian* explained this concept when describing the benefits he gained from his internship, "I would say that it was kind of understanding the social interpersonal aspect of managing a professional life. It really highlighted the fact that you have to manage these professional relationships with people and learn to work with managers and learn your place in the system and things like that" (interview). *Amy* also said, "I learned through watching her how to manage people when you've really never really done it before" (interview). "I learned a lot more of the rules and ins and outs and there is a lot of politics, it is more than just training a horse" (interview) *Eric*. *Heather* summarized this benefit when she said, "I think that my time there was so valuable. I learned so much even just the silly things like how to deal with people and manage people and how to have different opinions and still work together" (interview).

While not all of the lessons learned about managing people were positive, "There were just some people I just did not get along with in my internship" (interview) said

Kim. The majority were, *Tabitha* explained, “I learned a lot about how to manage people in a way, specifically vets, which is pretty hard because that’s a whole different type of people that I haven’t really had a lot of contact with before” (interview).

Research Question 2

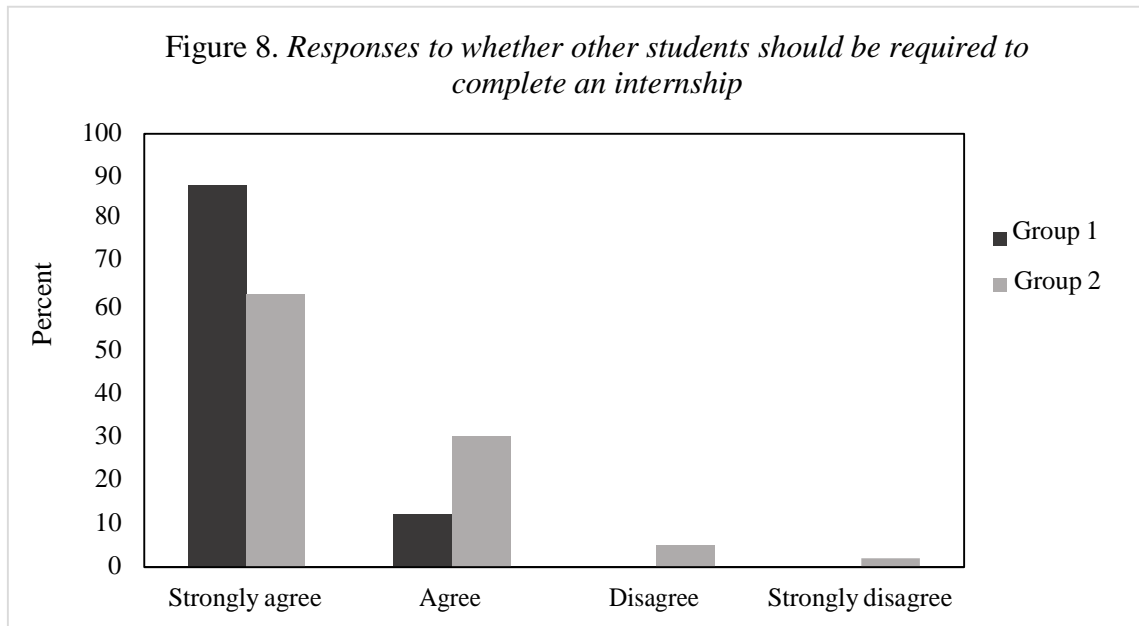
To what extent do students who have been required to complete an internship believe other students should also be required to do one? Why or why not.

Quantitative Data

Seventy-three percent of respondents *Strongly agreed* that at least one internship should be required for every Equine Science and Management Student at their university while 23% *Agreed*, 3% *Disagreed*, and 1% *Strongly disagreed* (N = 97).

Research Question 2a: Is there a relationship between the primary reason that students completed their internship and whether they agreed or disagreed with the mandatory internship policy?

A statistically significant relationship between the reason students completed an internship and whether they felt other students should be required to do one was identified. Students who would have completed an internship even if they weren’t required to (Group 1) were more in favor of requiring one than students who completed one to some degree because they were required to (Group 2) $\chi^2(3, N = 97) = 8.44, p = 0.0377$. Eighty-eight percent of Group 1 (students who would have completed an internship even if it weren’t required) *Strongly agreed* and 12% *Agreed* that at least one internship should be required of every student (N = 41). Whereas 63% of Group 2 (students who completed an internship to some degree because it was required) *Strongly agreed*, 30% *Agreed*, 5% *Disagreed* and 2% *Strongly disagreed* (N = 56). See Figure 8.



Qualitative Data

Both students who participated in the oral interviews and those that gave their reason for supporting the internship requirement on the survey listed several reasons why they felt that internships should be required. They indicated that the benefits of these internships were numerous and felt that if not required students who did not participate in an internship would miss out on important benefits. Other reasons for supporting the mandatory internship policy included the influence of the requirement on the internship site students chose to complete it, the benefit of the accompanying assignments, and the value of the internship requirement in helping distinguish the program.

Survey data

To gain an initial understanding of all of the study participants' perceptions of the internship policy, the open-ended survey response data were analyzed first. Eighty-six participants completed question, *Please explain why you feel students should or should not be required to complete an internship for the Equine Science and Management*

degree at your university. Of those, 80 felt that the program should require an internship for every student and 6 felt they should not. The frequency of the reported reasons can be found in Table 10.

Table 10

Survey reasons regarding requirement policy

| <u>Category</u> | <u>Number</u> | <u>%</u> |
|--|---------------|----------|
| Apply classroom concepts in real world setting | 3 | 1.4% |
| Build reputation in industry | 4 | 1.8% |
| Career clarity and exposure success | 36 | 16.3% |
| Career success | 19 | 8.6% |
| Develops work ethic | 3 | 1.4% |
| Experience | 43 | 19.5% |
| Gain academic credit | 4 | 1.8% |
| Get foot in the door | 2 | 0.9% |
| Get out of comfort zone | 7 | 3.2% |
| Increases learning | 13 | 5.9% |
| Increases industry involvement | 9 | 4.1% |
| Job application skills | 6 | 2.7% |
| Leads to job | 9 | 4.1% |
| Makes program unique | 3 | 1.4% |
| Meets program goals | 2 | 0.9% |
| Increases opportunities | 5 | 2.3% |
| Networking | 38 | 17.2% |
| Professionalism | 1 | 0.5% |
| Resume | 10 | 4.5% |
| Teaches responsibility | 4 | 1.8% |

Combined data

The diversity of reasons given by all survey participants for why an internship should be required was considerable. The survey data were then combined with the interview data related to the mandatory internship policy and the categories condensed to

evaluate the overall perception of the policy. The categories of reasons from both survey and interview responses supporting or not supporting the mandatory internship policy are listed in Table 11.

Table 11

| <i>Reasons related to policy</i> | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|----------|
| <u>Category</u> | <u>Number</u> | <u>%</u> |
| Build resume and reputation | 22 | 7.4% |
| Build communication and job skills | 8 | 2.7% |
| Career clarity, exposure, and success | 67 | 22.6% |
| Convenient | 5 | 1.7% |
| Develops work ethic | 5 | 1.7% |
| Educational and gain credit | 10 | 3.4% |
| Experience | 71 | 23.9% |
| Financial restrictions | 8 | 2.7% |
| Get out of comfort zone | 15 | 5.1% |
| Industry exposure | 16 | 5.4% |
| Influence of site | 7 | 2.4% |
| Makes program unique | 8 | 2.7% |
| Networking | 47 | 15.8% |
| Professionalism | 4 | 1.3% |
| Supporting research | 1 | 0.3% |
| Timing issues | 3 | 1.0% |

Reasons for requiring an internship

Benefits of required internships

There were many reasons that respondents gave in support of requiring internships. The most common was because of the many benefits students credited to them. The most commonly referenced benefits participants cited when explaining why internships should be required were Experience (23.9%), Networking (15.8%), and

Career clarity and Success (22.6%). *Bridget* explained that internships should be required because, “You can never get enough experience” (interview). *Brian* also supported requiring internships because, “A lot of students may come in with work experience, but not all do. If you end up graduating without work experience it’s kind of like you are really missing a fundamental aspect on a job application” (interview). One survey responder stated, “The internship is an invaluable way to network and build a reputation within an equine industry” (survey) while another reasoned, “These internships are great to put on resumes when job hunting, especially when your work experience is minimal” (survey). Another said, “Having work related experience is invaluable when first coming on to the job market. I most likely would have not done an internship if not required, and could’ve ended up unemployed after graduate. Instead, I was employed immediately following” (survey).

Lack of participation if not required

Many study participants acknowledged that if the internship was not required some students would not complete it and would miss out on the benefits. “Especially with people my age, if something is not required, you’re probably not going to do it” (interview) said *Ellie*. In another interview *Daniel* explained that he would require in internship because, “I would say 80% of the kids would not take the internship if they don’t have to take it, and that’s not a good thing” (interview). One survey participant described the need for the mandatory internship policy saying, “If not required, the students who really need the experiences will simply not participate and could miss out on very valuable future job opportunities and learning experiences” (survey).

Using internships as college credit

The ability of students who were working part-time in the industry already to be able to count the experience for academic credit was a commonly referenced advantage of having a mandatory internship policy. “Like I said,” *Bridget* explained, “probably the best thing about it was just that I could use it as one of my classes so I could have more time to have the internship” (interview). She later explained that the required internship was “My reason for going to UK. Going in, I knew that it was something I wanted to do and then it was just awesome that I could use it as a class credit, so that way I could have more time to work and have it count for credit” (interview). One survey participant said, “I think that having an internship requirement that students can use as credit will make it ultimately easier for them to spend some time and get a good internship” (survey).

Requirement influence on internship site

Participants often referred to the influence of the internship being required on the sites where they chose to intern. Many talked about the fact that they were looking for part time work anyway, but the internship requirement influenced what they chose. *Kacie* explained, “The internship requirement kind of forced me to explore my options as I was looking for a part time job. The reality was I just needed the money. It would have been just as easy to get a part time job somewhere outside the industry but I was trying to kill two birds with one stone, knock out my requirements for my degree and fulfill my employment desire” (interview). Both *Heather* and *Jeff* also referred to this in their interviews. *Heather* said, “I could have easily gotten a job with my dad or internship with my dad or something like that but it made me branch out and meet someone new” (interview). *Jeff* explained that if the internship had not been required he would have

either, “Gone for what made me the most money that summer or you know, just stayed on you know, working with my dad or whatever. By doing the internship I gained a different perspective” (interview).

Program benefits and location

Some students supported the mandatory internship policy because it benefited the program. One survey respondent said that the policy was particularly appropriate for the university used in this study because it, “is situated in the middle of the horse capital of the world, offering students the opportunity to gain experience at the best industry organizations in the world. No other University in the world can say that” (survey). In his interview *Eric* said that the mandatory internship was something that, “Helps keep this program unique and that is extremely valuable when you have other equestrian colleges that many people may look towards” (interview). The location of the program in relation to why internships should be required was also referenced, “We are so lucky to be surrounded by so many different equine businesses in Kentucky,” (interview) said *Karen*.

Ellie explained, “I really do feel that the greatest benefit to students that go to UK is the required internship program. Because I think that while learning in the classroom can prepare you, you really need that hands-on experience before you get into the real world” (interview). One survey participant put it similarly, “internships through the ESMA program offer students the chance to gain experience with world class organizations that are located on 15 minutes from their classroom door” (survey). *Eric* repeated this same idea, “I do really appreciate that you require it in such a horse dense area. So people don’t have excuses as to why they can’t do it’ (interview).

One survey responder almost completely summed up all of the reasons given to support requiring internships, “I believe every student should be required to have an internship. It allows students to have an experience they may have otherwise not been a part of and it opens doors. You make a ton of connections and you learn both a little more about what you want to do and a little more about what you don’t want to do, both equally important. The internship also teaches you responsibility and what it’s like to work in a field you’re considering. Without this internship program I most likely wouldn’t have had a job as soon as I graduated but thankfully my required internship turned into a full-time job” (survey).

Reasons for not requiring

Students reported three reasons for not requiring internships: the financial hardship, the added stress of so many hours in an already over-crowded semester, and the possibility of weeding out less motivated students.

Financial

Those that felt an internship should not be mandatory gave several reasons. The most common reasons again requiring internships were financially based. “I think it’s a valuable source for education, experience, networking and resume building. However, I think it is hard on students to do an internship, especially if it’s unpaid. I know a lot of students who work outside of classes and it would be hard to add an internship unless it could replace a paying job completely” (survey). *Roger* explained that requiring an internship is a problem for “Somebody that is working their way through college and if they have to quit a job to go to this internship” (interview). He also talked about the disparity in internship opportunities depending on a student’s financial situation, “Your

options are a little bit more open I think if you are not trying to be financially independent” (interview).

Additional hours during a semester

Several students who thought internships should not be required cited timing issues. “I believe the timing in conjunction with required classes to take the internship is very inconvenient. I think every student should be encouraged to participate in an internship to help decide if they want to continue in that path, but 120 hours is a lot” (survey) explained one participant. Another put it, “It puts a lot of stress on students when they struggle to find or work an internship into their schedule just so they can graduate” (survey). *Amy* cited “They think they don’t have enough time” (interview) as one of the main reasons she thought students might view the internship requirement negatively.

However, some students argued that saying there wasn’t enough time for a required internship was only an excuse. When asked if she still would have completed an internship if it had not been required, *Kim* reasoned that she would not because, “I probably would have come up with an excuse of not having enough time to do it” (interview).

Weeding out less-motivated students

Another theme that emerged against requiring internships was the idea that internships were a way of weeding out those who were going to ‘make it’ (survey) from those who were not. Those who expressed this opinion suggested that rather than being required, they should be available. One survey responder explained, “Internships should readily be offered, like they do now, but if students aren’t required to take an internship

then either they will sink or swim” (survey). Similarly, in her interview *Amanda* commented that it was interesting watching other students on internship because, “They were sort of making it or breaking it” (interview).

Along this same line of thinking, a few participants supported requiring internships but only for ‘other’ (survey) students. One explained, “I was ambitious to learn on my own whether there was requirement or not. Having said that, I do feel that it is necessary for those students who did not have the work ethic or background that I did” (survey). When explaining why she thought the internship should be required *Ellie* said, “I think for me, I probably would have done one but I think for the majority of the program, they would not” (interview).

Participant thoughts on changes to policy

Participants were asked what changes, if any, they would make to the existing mandatory internship policy if it were up to them. Most said they would not change it, some thought that there could be an option for some students to test out of the internship, and more than one suggested that perhaps requiring two internships would be even better.

Testing out of internship requirement

When asked if they thought the policy should be changed to allow students to test out of the internship requirement the overwhelming majority of interview participants said no. *Ellie* explained, “I don’t think that testing out should be an option at all” (interview). *Kacie* was against students being able to test out of the internship based on her own experience, “I feel confident that I could have tested out of the requirement but the reality is that I had no idea what I was going to gain from the experience” (interview). The only exception that was given to not being allowed to test out of the internship was

for non-traditional students that could ‘make the case for extensive experience’ (interview) *Roger*. *Eric* explained, “One person comes to mind. She was a bit older and had her own business. That one individual is my only exception” (interview).

How students would change the policy

All but two of the seventeen interviewed said that they would require an internship if they were in charge of the program. One said that they may not require them for students that had “A certain amount of prior work experience in a relevant field” (interview) *Brian* and the other said they thought they would require them but they would “Be really flexible on it” (interview) *Roger*. Twelve of the fifteen who said they would require them replied that they would “absolutely” require one. The reasons for requiring them varied. *Karen* explained that she would require them because, “Forcing them out of their comfort zone and maybe doing something that they don’t quite know as much about, it’s only going to help them even if they don’t see it at first” (interview). *Ellie*, on the other hand referred to the connections students gain from an internship, “I think those connections are very important to establish. I think had it not been required people just wouldn’t have those connections later on” (interview).

Requiring more than one internship

There was strong support among both interview participants and survey respondents for requiring more than one internship. “I think that they should do one, but having said that they should do two” (interview) said *Karen*. Most of those who expressed this viewpoint felt that, “One needs to focus on outside of your comfort zone” (interview) *Eric*. *Ellie* explained, “Do one at a place they’re comfortable with it gives the motivation to do one that’s probably a little more outside of their comfort zone”

(interview). When sharing that she felt every student has to do an internship, *Amy* declared, “I’d even find the way to see if I can do two because I think it’s certainly important” (interview). There were even those that felt that two internships should be the minimum, “If there was a question about how many internships a student should complete, I would suggest a minimum of two” (survey).

Other students’ perceptions of the policy

The interview participants’ perceptions of how other students viewed the mandatory internship policy ranged significantly. Some thought that other students had a favorable view of the internship requirement. “I personally didn’t experience anybody that wasn’t really looking forward to it” (interview) said *Amanda*. “I think just from the people I knew, everybody saw it as an essential thing” (interview) echoed *Bridget*. *Eric* reflected, “I think that nobody has ever said it was an issue” (interview) and *Jeff* stated, “I really never heard anything negative about it” (interview).

Others acknowledged that students had a negative opinion of it. “I think a lot of times beforehand people are annoyed that they have to do them” (interview) said *Amy*. *Tabitha* explained, “I think a lot of times people are a little bit reluctant to go the internship because of the aspect that it’s required” (interview). Some felt that the requirement could “be somewhat frustrating for students who have previously worked in the industry” (survey). *Carrie* recalled, “I know there was a couple of people from my class that felt kind of like frustrated or stress about it, trying to find like the internship that was accommodating to class schedules or that sort of thing” (interview). When reflecting on her classmate’s opinion of the internship requirement *Maggie* stated that “A lot of them maybe thought it was a little bit of a hassle beforehand, like it was something

that was required that was going to take up a lot of time” (interview). *Daniel* also observed this, “I always try to talk to different students, and the general complaint was that they will not, a lot of people will not do an internship if they can get away with it” (interview).

Nearly all of the students who felt other students had a negative perception of the required internship before doing it, described how the experience changed their perspective of the policy. *Ellie* explained that most students realize “After the fact why we are required to do it” (interview). She said, “A lot of people are like, ‘oh this is something I have to do. It’s required.’ And then you get out there and you really have fun with it, you learn so much” (interview).

Tabitha described the same thing, “You kind of see them like, oh, it’s something I need to do but from the most part of what I’ve heard of other people like once they’re in it everyone is really enjoying it” (interview). *Maggie* discussed about how a lot of students may see the requirement negatively at first but that, “Afterwards everybody that I’ve talked to had very positive experiences and were thankful it was a requirement” (interview). *Amy*, who also described students being annoyed with the requirement beforehand, said, “But then after they do them and while they’re doing them they learn all these really incredible things and a lot of them ended up in jobs related to their internship and they’re also thankful and glad that they had the experience” (interview).

Research Question 3

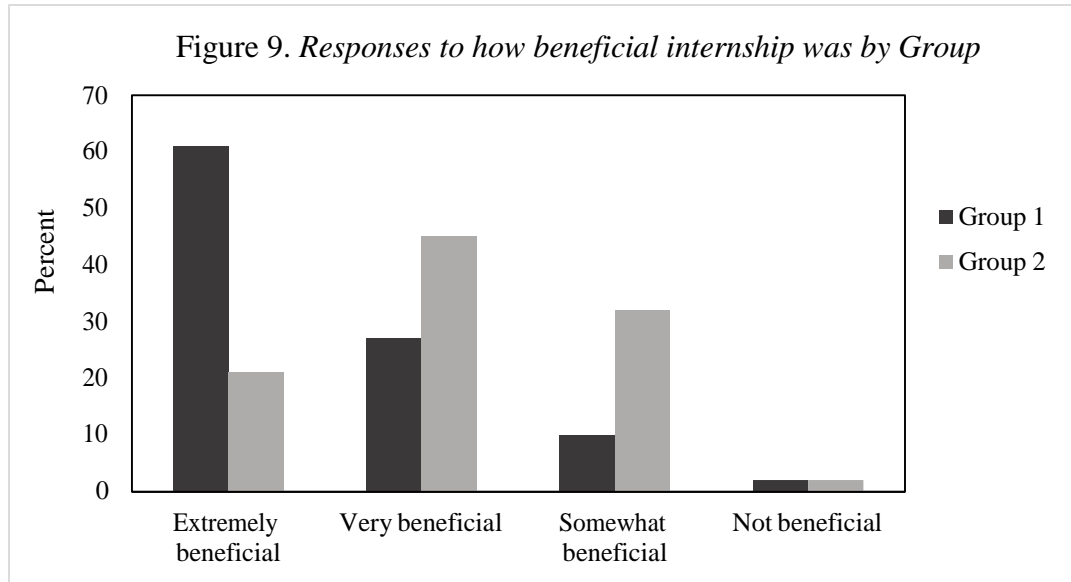
To what extent does a student’s primary reason for going on an internship correlate with their level of satisfaction with the experience?

Quantitative Data

There was not a statistically significant relationship between the reason that students participated in their internship and their level of satisfaction with it $\chi^2(4, N = 97) = 6.48, p = 0.1659$.

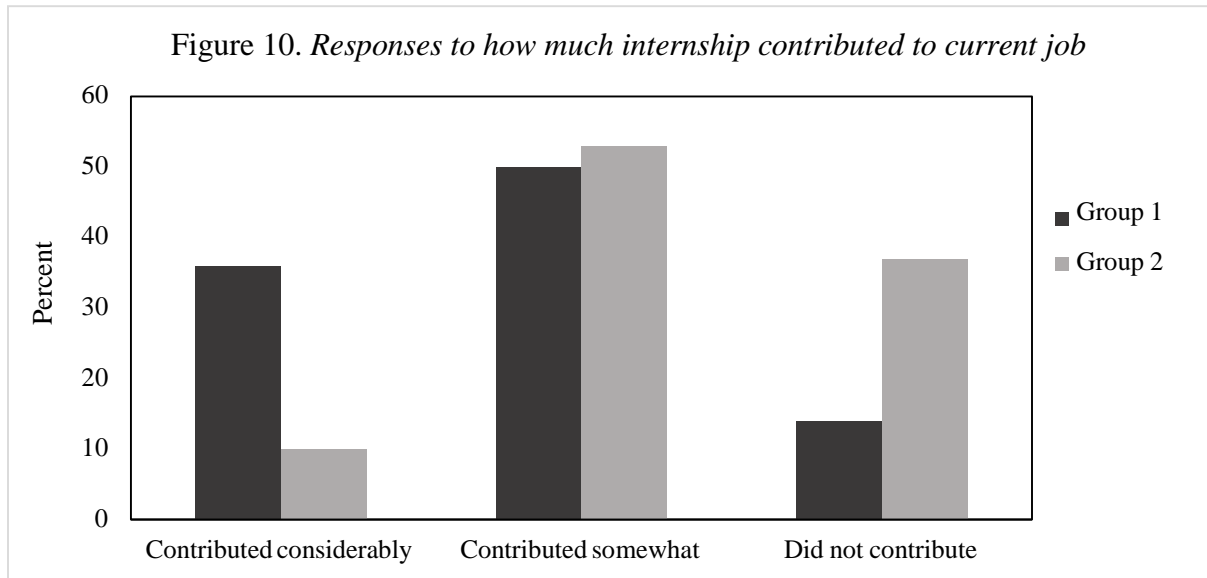
Research Question 3a: Is there a relationship between the primary reason that students completed their internship and how beneficially they viewed it?

A statistically significant relationship between the reason that students completed an internship and how beneficially they viewed it was identified. Students who would have completed an internship even if it was not required (Group 1) viewed the experience as more beneficial than students who completed one to some degree because it was required (Group 2) $\chi^2(3, N = 97) = 17.01, p = 0.0007$. Specifically, 61% of students who would have completed an internship regardless of if it was required (Group 1) viewed it as *Extremely beneficial* and 27% as *Very beneficial*, 10% as *Somewhat beneficial*, and 2% as *Not beneficial* (N = 41). While among students who to some degree completed it because it was required (Group 2), 21% reported the experience as being *Extremely beneficial*, 45% as being *Very beneficial*, 32%, as being *Somewhat beneficial*, and 2% as being *Not beneficial* (N = 56). See Figure 9.



Research Question 3b: Is there a relationship between the primary reason that students completed their internship and job benefits?

A statistically significant relationship was found between the primary reason students participated in their internship and how much they felt it contributed to their current job. Specifically, the students who would have participated in an internship even if it was not required (Group 1) felt that their internship contributed more to their current job than students who completed one to some degree because it was required (Group 2) $\chi^2(2, N = 97) = 8.49, p = 0.0144$. Of those who would have completed an internship regardless of whether it was required (Group 1), 36% reported that it contributed considerably to their current job, 50% reported that it contributed somewhat, and 14% reported it did not contribute at all ($N = 41$). While among those that completed it to some degree because it was required (Group 2), 10% felt that it contributed considerably to their current job, 53% felt it contributed somewhat and 37% felt that it did not contribute at all ($N = 56$). See Figure 10.



There were no statistically significant relationships between the reason students participated in their internship and the any of the job benefit variables measured: Salary range $\chi^2(6, N = 97) = 7.20, p = 0.3025$, Health insurance $\chi^2(1, N = 97) = 0.34, p = 0.5627$, Retirement plan $\chi^2(1, N = 97) = 0.00, p = 0.9822$, Vacation time $\chi^2(1, N = 97) = 0.08, p = 0.7804$, Housing $\chi^2(1, N = 97) = 0.16, p = 0.6922$, Cell phone $\chi^2(1, N = 97) = 0.04, p = 0.8466$, Automobile $\chi^2(1, N = 97) = 0.21, p = 0.6474$, Laptop/iPad $\chi^2(1, N = 97) = 1.60, p = 0.2060$, or Other benefits $\chi^2(1, N = 97) = , p = 0.6474$. There were also no statistically significant relationships between the reason they participated in an internship and whether or not students were employed in the industry $\chi^2(1, N = 97) = 1.47, p = 0.1675$ or how many months passed between when they graduated and when they started their first full time job $\chi^2(4, N = 97) = 6.16, p = 0.1875$.

Research Question 3c: Is there a relationship between the primary reason a student went on internship and how well they felt it prepared them at certain career skills?

Several statistically significant relationships were found between the primary reason a student went on internship and how well they felt it prepared them for certain career skills. There were significant differences between how well Group 1 and Group 2 felt their internship prepared them for certain career skills. See Table 12.

Table 12

Chi-square analysis applied to Group 1 vs Group 2 related to internship preparation for career skills

| <i>Career Skills (N=97)</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>χ^2</i> | <i>p</i> |
|------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|---------------|
| Creative thinking | 4 | 13.08 | 0.0109 |
| Information searching | 3 | 8.67 | 0.0340 |
| Problem solving | 3 | 2.67 | 0.4450 |
| Job interviewing | 4 | 7.45 | 0.1140 |
| Job networking | 3 | 5.36 | 0.1474 |
| Resume writing | 4 | 8.66 | 0.0703 |
| Leadership | 4 | 10.64 | 0.0310 |
| Teamwork | 3 | 7.54 | 0.0566 |
| Interpersonal communication | 3 | 2.47 | 0.4799 |
| Oral presentation | 4 | 9.8 | 0.0439 |
| Written communication | 4 | 11.26 | 0.0238 |

Students would have participated in an internship even if it was not required (Group 1) were more likely to *Agree* or *Strongly agree* than students who participated in one to some degree because it was required (Group 2) that their internship prepared them well at *Creative thinking* $\chi^2(4, N = 97) = 13.08$, $p = 0.0109$ *Information searching* $\chi^2(3, N = 97) = 8.67$, $p = 0.0340$, *Leadership* $\chi^2(4, N = 97) = 10.64$, $p = 0.0310$, *Oral presentation* $\chi^2(4, N = 97) = 9.80$, $p = 0.0439$, and *Written communication* $\chi^2(4, N = 97) = 11.26$, $p = 0.0238$. No relationship was found between the primary reason that students participated in an internship and how they felt that internship prepared them for *Teamwork* $\chi^2(3, N = 97) = 7.54$, $p = 0.0566$, *Resume writing* $\chi^2(4, N = 97) = 8.66$, $p = 0.0703$, *Problem solving* $\chi^2(3, N = 97) = 2.67$, $p = 0.4450$, *Job interviewing* $\chi^2(4, N = 97) = 7.45$, $p =$

0.1140, *Job networking* $\chi^2(3, N=97) = 5.36, p = 0.1474$, *Interpersonal communication* $\chi^2(3, N=97) = 2.47, p = 0.4799$.

Research Question 3d: Is there a relationship between the primary reason a student completed their internship and how well they felt it prepared them at certain career skills compared to how well their overall undergraduate experience prepared them at the same skills?

Severally statistically significant relationships were identified between the primary reason a student completed their internship and how well they felt it prepared them at certain career skills versus how well their overall undergraduate experience prepared them at the same skills. First, there were statistically significant relationships between how well Group 1 felt their internship prepared them at certain skills compared to how well their overall undergraduate experience prepared them for those same skills. See Table 13.

Table 13

Chi-square analysis applied to Group 1 related to internship preparation vs. university preparation for career skills

| <i>Career Skills (N=97)</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>χ^2</i> | <i>p</i> |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|---------------|
| Creative thinking | 9 | 3.8 | 0.9242 |
| Information searching | 9 | 5.76 | 0.7641 |
| Problem solving* | 9 | 17.24 | 0.0451 |
| Job interviewing | 9 | 14.3 | 0.1121 |
| Job networking | 9 | 15.68 | 0.0738 |
| Resume writing | 12 | 14.08 | 0.2955 |
| Leadership | 9 | 8.6 | 0.4754 |
| Teamwork | 6 | 9.47 | 0.1468 |
| Interpersonal communication* | 6 | 13.76 | 0.0325 |
| Oral presentation** | 9 | 21.64 | 0.0418 |
| Written communication | 9 | 12.71 | 0.1760 |

* *internship better prepared them*

** *university better prepared them*

Students who would have gone on an internship even if it was not required (Group 1) were more likely to *Strongly agree* that their internship rather than their overall undergraduate experience prepared them well at *Problem solving* $\chi^2(9, N = 41) = 17.24$, $p = 0.0451$ and *Interpersonal communication* $\chi^2(6, N = 41) = 13.76$, $p = 0.0325$. On the other hand, they were more likely to *Strongly agree* that their overall undergraduate experience rather than their internship prepared them well at *Oral presentation* $\chi^2(9, N = 41) = 21.64$, $p = 0.0418$.

There was no difference among students who would have participated in an internship regardless of if it was required (Group 1) on how they felt their internship versus their overall undergraduate experience prepared them well at *Information searching* $\chi^2(9, N = 41) = 5.76$, $p = 0.7641$, *Job interviewing* $\chi^2(9, N = 97) = 14.30$, $p = 0.1121$, *Networking* $\chi^2(9, N = 41) = 15.68$, $p = 0.0738$, *Resume writing* $\chi^2(12, N = 41) = 14.08$, $p = 0.2955$, *Leadership* $\chi^2(9, N = 41) = 8.60$, $p = 0.4754$, *Teamwork* $\chi^2(6, N = 41) = 9.47$, $p = 0.1468$, *Written communication* $\chi^2(9, N = 41) = 12.71$, $p = 0.1760$, or *Creative thinking* $\chi^2(9, N = 41) = 3.80$, $p = 0.9242$.

Several statistically significant relationships were also identified between how well Group 2 felt their internship prepared them at certain skills compared to how well their overall undergraduate experience prepared them for those same skills. See Table 14.

Table 14

Chi-square analysis applied to Group 2 related to internship preparation vs. university preparation for career skills

| <i>Career Skills (N=97)</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>χ^2</i> | <i>p</i> |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Creative thinking | 12 | 16.42 | 0.1728 |
| Information searching | 9 | 16.43 | 0.0584 |
| Problem solving | 6 | 8.11 | 0.2300 |
| Job interviewing** | 16 | 54.96 | <0.0001 |
| Job networking* | 12 | 35.01 | 0.0005 |
| Resume writing** | 16 | 32.69 | 0.0081 |
| Leadership** | 16 | 35.39 | 0.0035 |
| Teamwork | 12 | 13.25 | 0.3513 |
| Interpersonal communication* | 9 | 31.66 | 0.0002 |
| Oral presentation** | 16 | 53.84 | <0.0001 |
| Written communication | 9 | 14.04 | 0.2979 |

* *internship better prepared them*

** *university better prepared them*

Students who went on an internship to some degree because it was required (Group 2) were more likely to *Strongly agree* that their internship rather than their overall undergraduate experience prepared them well for *Job networking* $\chi^2(12, N = 56) = 35.01$, $p = 0.0005$ and *Interpersonal communication* $\chi^2(9, N = 56) = 31.66$, $p = 0.0002$. These students were also more likely to *Strongly agree* that their overall undergraduate experience rather than their internship prepared them well for *Job interviewing* $\chi^2(16, N = 56) = 54.96$, $p = < 0.0001$, *Oral presentation* $\chi^2(16, N = 56) = 53.84$, $p = < 0.0001$, *Resume writing* $\chi^2(16, N = 56) = 32.69$, $p = 0.0081$ and *Leadership* $\chi^2(16, N = 56) = 35.39$, $p = 0.0035$.

There was no difference among students who participated in an internship to some degree because it was required regarding how they felt their internship versus their overall undergraduate experience prepared them well at *Information searching* $\chi^2(9, N = 56) = 16.43$, $p = 0.0584$, *Problem solving* $\chi^2(6, N = 56) = 8.11$, $p = 0.2300$, *Teamwork* $\chi^2(12, N = 56) = 13.25$, $p = 0.3513$, and *Written communication* $\chi^2(9, N = 56) = 14.04$, $p = 0.2979$.

12, N = 56) = 13.25, $p = 0.3513$, *Written communication* $\chi^2(9, N = 56) = 14.04$, $p = 0.2979$ or *Creative thinking* $\chi^2(12, N = 56) = 16.42$, $p = 0.1728$.

Qualitative Data

Qualitative data results revealed that whether or not students indicated they would have participated in an internship if it had not been required did not diminish the positive effects they reported as a result of the policy.

Benefits of mandatory internship policy

The mandatory internship policy mandated both work experience and accompanying educational assignments. The benefits of both were studied. Some participants cited benefits of the mandatory policy overall and others referenced the required assignments in particular. From the influence on the particular site chosen to the opportunities afforded to how it shaped the relationships forged, the benefits of the mandatory internship policy were numerous.

Selection of the internship site

Several students felt that the internship requirement made them choose a different work site than they would have chosen if they had only been looking for a part-time job in the industry. *Jeff* explained, “I would have just gone for what would have made me the most money or something like that, you know, thinking short term instead of long term” (interview). *Carrie* echoed this, “it definitely pushed me more to find a suitable place” (interview). “The internship requirement forced me to explore my options,” said *Kacie*, “the reality was I just needed the money. It would have been just as easy to get a part time job outside of the industry but I was trying to kill two birds with one stone, knock out my requirements for my degree and fulfill my employment desire” (interview).

Not only did the requirement make students to choose a different site for their internship than had they simply been looking for a part-time job, it also forced some to select a site that was outside their comfort zone. In her interview, *Heather* stated that she probably would have still done an internship even if it wasn't required but that she "most likely wouldn't have gone out of my way to meet someone new or go somewhere I had never been if not for the requirement policy" (interview). She went on to explain, "I wouldn't have wanted to do that, so that's why I was happy that it was required because just being me, and being like shy and stuff, I probably wouldn't have gone out of my way to call Mike and be like 'Hi, I need an internship'" (interview).

Irene described a similar scenario, "I think, because knowing myself, I think that there's certain avenues that I wouldn't have gone down had it not been required, I might have just stuck with an internship that I came upon because it was of interest to me. However, the required internship allows you to think a little bit more about in a logistical sense and take more out of the postings that were sent. I probably wouldn't have gained as much had it not been required" (interview). *Tabitha* explained that if the internship had not been required she would have still worked in the industry but, "It definitely wouldn't have been at Hagyard, so that was, that was definitely a plus" (interview).

Developing perseverance

Some students stated that because the internship was required it made them persevere when their internship got challenging. When listing the ways he benefited from the internship being required, *Brian* said, "Another aspect just might be that it was a difficult one. But my career too has a lot of challenges and a lot of hours ahead. There's certainly an amount of grit and perseverance I think it takes to maintain a job that's that

demanding – just time and physically. I think the lessons are similar” (interview).

Similarly, *Irene* explained, “I don’t know if I would have stuck with the internship had it not been required, especially being in customer service when I didn’t have the best experience. So I wouldn’t say that I would have stuck with it as long had it not been a required thing that I needed to complete. It really encouraged me to see it through,” (interview).

Providing more opportunities during the internship

Many students felt that because the internship was required it increased the opportunities they were given. *Kacie* explained, “I got to see more of what my boss’s role was, go to our meetings, go to the board of directors and things like that. I don’t think I would have had the opportunity to do that had I just been a part time employee” (interview). One survey participant put it, “my employers took the time to teach me the office side as well as the hands-on side, they were more willing to teach me new things because it was required” (survey). When asked how the internship requirement influenced her experience *Amanda* said that she was given more opportunities including getting to “Help with some of the management experience, getting volunteers scheduled, dealing with them when something went wrong or when they weren’t doing what they should” (interview).

Influence on employers

Several of those interviewed described benefits that resulted from their employers knowing it was required. From increased communication to increased investment, all of the benefits given were positive. *Eric* described how the requirement positively influenced his experience, especially when it came to his supervisor, “He really helped

me out and gave me opportunities to run with, so to speak. It was a very unique opportunity; it was more fun” (interview). *Irene* also described how the internship requirements, “It allowed me to push my mentor, my boss, a little bit more to teach me new things” (interview). *Karen* echoed this, “I think I would have a different viewpoint and also my managers would have had a different view point if was just another hired hand. I think the designation of internship and having it be required was really important” (interview).

Some felt that because their supervisors knew the internship was required they were more invested in the experience. As *Karen* explained, “My advisor came out to my internship and evaluated it. It was to fulfill the designation of intern, but they knew they were being graded on it as well in a way. I think that was a really important part of the experience that I got. They knew they were contributing to our education, not just hiring a groom for the summer,” (interview).

Effects of the required assignments

All of the internships in this study were accompanied by the same academic assignments. The assignments were as follows: 1) the completion of the university required Learning Contract which included the student’s information, internship site contact information, a summary of the duties of the internship, the goals for the internship, and a description of the required assignments; 2) an in-person or phone meeting between the intern and employer prior to the start of the internship to discuss and identify their goals for the internship – these goals were then typed up (both the intern and their direct employer signed them) and they were turned into the internship coordinator; 3) students had to keep a log of the dates and hours worked for the duration

of the internship; 4) a list of required questions based on the established goals were developed with the internship coordinator that the intern had to ask during the internship; 5) a reflection paper including the student's reflections on the experience, a discussion of how the established goals were or were not met, and a description of how the experience influenced their career path; 6) four pictures of the intern 'in action' on the internship; 7) a half-way point update; 8) a final evaluation of the intern's performance completed by the employer; and 9) a final evaluation by the internship experience completed by the intern.

Many students described the positive impact of the assignments on the internship. *Amy* felt that because the internship was required it, "Made me have conversations with my boss that maybe I would not have had if I wouldn't have had to. I think we had a lot more conversations that I would have just not even thought about or avoided if it were not required" (interview). She went on to explain, "We had to have conversations about my performance, which are conversations that are difficult to have, and we had to evaluate what I was doing and she had to seriously you know, train me and work with me because I was stuck with her for a certain amount of time" (interview). *Kacie* said that because of the requirements, "I had open conversations with my supervisor who was the executive director of the organization and as a result of him understanding fully what I was trying to accomplish he kind of took me under his wing" (interview).

When asked about the effects of the required assignments *Maggie* commented, "It's nice to have a reason as well instead of saying, 'I'm being nosey and I'd like to know how this organization is structured' you can say, 'Oh, this is an assignment and something I that have to do'" (interview). *Tabitha* felt that the requirements made the

internship different than other internships. She explained, “The biggest part was the goals, because in a regular internship it’s not like you’re going to talk to your supervisor and setup these goals, so I think that having that be a requirement was really good” (interview). “I think that their managers’ attitudes are more likely to shift with the designation,” said *Karen* when discussing the importance of having the internship required.

Some felt they were more invested because it was required as well. *Heather* discussed how the requirement influenced her commitment as well, “I think that it makes it more formal in the fact that you have to do it so you are not going to mess around you are going to take it and make it important to you” (interview). *Amanda* said, “I knew that there were certain criteria that I had to do for the internship, for the class, and I don’t know that I would have taken it as seriously and really considered it an opportunity for a job if it wasn’t required for class. If I was just doing it on my own I would have considered it more of a volunteer experience and just not held it as high of a standard as I did” (interview).

Eric explained how the assignments made the internship experience better, “I definitely think that the internship in general should be required, but those specific attributes that I just mentioned would not have been possible without this particular experience” (interview). *Daniel* simply stated that because of the requirements, “I mean you had to be accountable” (interview), and *Kim* explained that because of the requirement to keep a log of their hours, “I did it a lot faster than I would have otherwise” (interview).

There were also those that did not feel like the requirement influenced the experience much. As *Roger* put it, “It didn’t really change honestly, I did almost all the same stuff I had been. I just had the excuse to go around take pictures and talk to different parts of the clinic that I didn’t normally visit, that I didn’t normally go to” (interview).

Value of goals

Some participants thought that the goals established at the beginning of the internship by the intern and their employer helped give the experience direction. As *Daniel* put it, “I think having those specific goals is what caused me like to have a good experience because we kind of knew like knew where we were headed to. We had like actual things to do, it kind of wasn’t like I showed up and there wasn’t anything for me to do,” (interview). He went on to say, “My supervisor was very involved. So she was really like intentional with following what we had talked about in the learning contract which wouldn’t have been possible if this was just like an internship that I got without being required” (interview).

When explaining why she was in favor of the mandatory internship policy and assignments, *Tabitha* said, “The biggest part was the goals, like being able to – because in a regular internship it’s not like you’re going to talk to your supervisor and setup these goals, so I think that having that been a requirement was a really good thing” (interview).

Opportunity for reflection

When discussing the internship requirements’ benefits *Brian* explained, “the fact that I was forced to reflect on it because it was an internship and because I kind of thought of it as a learning experience and as a class, that certainly helped” (interview).

Heather said, “My internship coordinator checked on me a lot just asking about school and wanting to know about the internship and the requirement and was very involved in the paperwork part of it and stuff like that” (interview). “So I had to critically think about, ‘ok, what skills am I learning? What am I doing on the day-to-day? How’s this going to help me?’ because we did have to end up utilizing that information towards the internship credit and writing things about it so it made me really think critically about what I was doing” (interview) *Irene*.

“I had to, you know, write the report,” explained *Jeff*, “and it really made me think about every day what I was learning from it and kind of, you know, not just go through the motion. I actually thought about what I was learning from each day” (interview). *Maggie* said, “Sometimes you get so wrapped up – especially where I was working 80, 90, 100 hours a week, it’s a lot of workload. But it was almost nice to have the required portion because it reminded you to take a step back, to actually think and record what you were doing rather than just flying through the whole thing. Because while you remember a lot of it, there’s a lot of it that unless you keep recording along the way you forget the specifics of it over time” (interview). She later followed this up, “I really did appreciate afterwards all of the different assignments that went along with it, and having to ask the questions provided” (interview).

Other students’ perspective

The perception of other student’s view of the mandatory internship policy varied. Some reported only a positive view of the policy, others a negative view and some reported a change in perception before versus after completing it among students.

Those who observed only positive perceptions explained, “I that know that people within my close group of friends, I know that we were all probably pretty excited about it and continued to be excited about it after the fact – especially since it led to a job”

Heather (interview). *Bridget* said, “From the people I knew, everybody saw it as an essential thing. I think people appreciated just having that experience behind them. If it wasn’t something that ultimately worked out for them, that was experience that they had gained. Mostly everybody saw it as an essential tool like I did” (interview). *Amanda* described how knowing the internship was required when starting the program may have positively impacted students’ perceptions of it, “Knowing that you had an internship from the beginning, I personally didn’t experience anybody that wasn’t looking forward to it” (interview).

Jeff also stated, “I really never heard anything negative about it. I mean everybody obviously wanted to, you know, do something with horses over the summer if they’re in the equine program so this just made a way where you’re actually getting something out of it” (interview). As *Karen* put it, “I think that everybody enjoyed their internships. I think they had a positive experience. Most of them had a really positive experience if they chose the right place for them” (interview). When discussing other student’s views of the internship *Kacie* said, “When I did speak with them, others shared similar experiences that they grew a lot as a result of their internship and that it helped them later on down the road to secure future employment” (interview).

Other participants described a negative view of the internship requirement among students. In her interview *Carrie* described this several times. Initially when discussing students’ initial opinions of the internship requirement she said, “I know there was a

couple of people from my class that kind of felt frustrated or stress about it, trying to find like the internship that was accommodating to class schedules or that sort of thing. I know that was a bit particularly stressful for that” (interview). *Carrie* later shared other student’s approach to the requirement “Was more that they had to get this done, this internship requirement done rather than ‘oh this is such a great experience’. I remember some of my classmates saying that” (interview). When explaining why the internship should be required, one survey participant acknowledged the negative view of a required internship among students, “While it can be somewhat frustrating for students who have previously worked in the industry, I believe hands on work experience is crucial for those who have not. I met several EQM students during my time in the program who had never worked at a barn or with a horse before this program. This is why I believe the EQM internship is very important for all students in the program” (survey).

There were also several participants that described scenarios where other students had negative view of the internship requirement initially but it viewed it favorably upon participation or completion. In her interview, *Amy* explained, “I think a lot of times beforehand people are annoyed that they have to do them because they think they don’t have enough time. But then after they do them and while they’re doing them, they learn all these incredible things and a lot of them ended up in jobs related to their internship and they’re also thankful that maybe their job has nothing to do with their internship but they’re glad that they had the experience because they can pull it into what they do now” (interview). *Ellie* made a similar statement, “I think a lot of people are like, ‘oh, this is something I have to do. It’s required.’ And then you get out there and you really, you have fun with it, you learn so much, so just like, okay, then you start to realize after the

fact of ‘oh, I see why we are required to do it. We learn so much. These are connections I need.’” (interview).

When asked how other students viewed the internship requirement *Maggie* explained, “I think a lot of them maybe thought it was a little bit of a hassle beforehand. But it was just something that was required, that was going to take up a lot of time. But I think afterwards, everybody that I’ve talked to had a very positive experience and were very thankful that it was a requirement at the end of the day because it really does give you a lot, I mean, you can’t even measure how much the internships give you as real world experience” (interview). *Tabitha* reported seeing the same thing, “I think that a lot of times people are a little bit reluctant to go on the internship because of the aspect that it’s required. Like you kind of see them like, ‘oh it’s something I need to do’ but for the most part of what I’ve heard of other people like once they’re in it everyone is really enjoying it” (interview).

Increased motivation

When discussing the internship requirement, some participants noted the role of motivation. In her interview, *Amanda* discussed the general role of motivation related to internships, “Everything you do is by your own motivation, your own time and really your own efforts. I think if you do a paid internship, you know you are getting paid for it, so that can become your motive” (interview). *Ellie* described something similar when discussing the reasons why students do internships, “I mean, you do get class credit. A lot of them are paid so there’s a monetary benefit to it as well but it’s just further incentive for people to get out in the industry, meet somebody, have a supervisor, have a work ethic before you are out of school” (interview).

As *Eric* stated, “I think most people who are truly in it for the right reasons will not have a problem doing the internship. I would be really surprised that anybody who even desired to be successful wouldn’t already be doing internships” (interview). *Ellie* also discussed the added value to students who completed internships that “They weren’t comfortable with or were a little more out there or they did more than one. They’ve really succeeded. They’re going far and I think that just shows the level of character and the level of self-starterness (sic) that you have to have in order to succeed and get a job right out of college” (interview).

Some described students who were intrinsically motivated to complete an internship regardless of the requirement. When asked how other students felt about the mandatory internship policy *Eric*, for example, explained, “I think that of the people that I really watched go through the program and kept in touch with, they have all been pretty self-motivated people like I said, regardless. So I think that nobody has ever said that it was an issue” (interview). One survey participant echoed this saying, “I believe student should be required to do an internship because it gives them a reason to see what it’s like in the equine industry. Hands on experience is the greatest experience and they can either use that experience to their advantage and network through their internship or just do it because they have to. It all depends on the mindset of the individual” (survey). *Karen* described something similar when she said, “I think that everybody enjoyed their internships. I think it is very important to choose an internship or have one recommended that suits you, that suits what you need. I often think you got to have the right work ethic approaching it” (interview).

Several students described their own motivation for doing an internship that existed regardless of the requirement. Some referred to their own motivation – or lack of – in completing an internship. *Tabitha* said, “I think because knowing myself I would have done the internship either way because I wanted to gain experience” (interview). When asked why she completed her internship, *Bridget* stated, “Because like I said, it was my reason for going to UK” (interview). One survey participant put it, “I most likely would have not done an internship if not required, and could’ve ended up unemployed after graduation. Instead, I was employed immediately following” (survey).

One survey participant even argued against requiring an internship so that if the students did not have the motivation to still do one it would be revealed, they explained, “I don’t think an internship should be required. I think internship should be readily offered like they do now but if students are required to take an internship then they will either sink or swim” (survey). Another put it, “I had a lot of hands-on work experience coming into college. I was ambitious to learn on my own whether there was the requirement for the internship or not. Having said that, I do feel that it is necessary for those students who did not have the work ethic or background that I did” (survey).

Research Question 4:

In what ways does length of time since internship completion influence students’ perception of the benefits they gained from an internship (e.g. right after they complete it, years after completing it, etc.)?

Quantitative Data

There was not a statistically significant relationship between the time that had passed since completing an internship and how beneficial students perceived it $\chi^2(27, N = 97) =$

36.44, $p = 0.1061$ or how much participants felt it contributed to their current job $\chi^2(18, N = 97) = 12.85, p = 0.8007$.

There was also not a statistically significant relationship between the time that had passed since completing an internship and how students felt the internship prepared them at *creative thinking* $\chi^2(8, N = 97) = 11.28, p = 0.1863$, *information searching* $\chi^2(6, N = 97) = 2.51, p = 0.8671$, *problem solving* $\chi^2(6, N = 97) = 6.06, p = 0.4160$, *job interviewing* $\chi^2(8, N = 97) = 10.82, p = 0.2123$, *job networking* $\chi^2(6, N = 97) = 10.95, p = 0.0899$, *resume writing* $\chi^2(8, N = 97) = 10.36, p = 0.2406$, *leadership* $\chi^2(8, N = 97) = 8.91, p = 0.3497$, *teamwork* $\chi^2(6, N = 97) = 7.26, p = 0.2974$, *interpersonal communication* $\chi^2(6, N = 97) = 66.80, p = 0.3394$, *oral presentation* $\chi^2(8, N = 97) = 8.53, p = 0.3831$ or *written communication* $\chi^2(8, N = 97) = 7.87, p = 0.4463$.

Research Question 4a: Does the amount of time that has passed since completing an internship influence a participant's view of the mandatory internship policy?

There was not a statistically significant relationship between the time that had passed since completing an internship and participant's opinion of the mandatory internship policy $\chi^2(27, N = 97) = 30.02, p = 0.3131$.

Qualitative Data

The only influence of time found in the qualitative data was the change in some students' perception of the internship requirement before participating in it versus afterwards as discussed in Research Question 3. Those changes in the perceived value of the required internship occurred either during the internship itself or immediately after. None of the participants reported a change in their perception of the internship related to the amount of time that passed since completing it. There was also no evidence of a

different perception between those who completed it recently and those who completed it many years ago.

Summary

The results of this survey provide important empirical data and anecdotal insight into the policy of requiring internships in an equine science program rather than offering them as an academic elective. With a robust number of participants in the online survey (97) and the oral interviews (17) it was possible to ask and answer several questions about the value of mandatory internships and students' perceptions of both that policy and the benefits they gained from the experience.

Overall, students who participated in a mandatory internship found it to be beneficial, reported high levels of satisfaction with the experience, felt it contributed to their current job, and strongly supported the policy. Students who participated in the study listed numerous benefits of internships including experience, providing career clarity, development of a work ethic, being forced out of their comfort zones, and developing interpersonal relationships. Ninety-six percent of those surveyed either *Strongly agreed* or *agreed* that all equine science students should be required to complete an internship in the industry. They valued the assignments, the opportunity for reflection, and even the change in the attitude of their supervisors on the work site when they knew that interns were participating in a course requirement. Negative responses were minimal which strengthens the supposition that requiring students to do something they might not have chosen if given the option still has powerful benefits.

Participants in this study also felt that their internship experience better prepared them than their overall undergraduate experience at problem solving, job interviewing,

networking, resume writing, oral presentation, interpersonal communication, and written communication at a statistically significant level. Yet they credited their overall undergraduate experience more than their internship for preparing them well at creative thinking and information searching at a statistically significant level.

When respondents were divided into two groups: Those who would have completed an internship even if it had not been required (Group 1) and those who completed one to some degree because it was required (Group 2), students who indicated they would have chosen an internship even if one had not been required, felt it was more beneficial and contributed more to their current job than students who primarily completed one to some degree because it was required. The difference was statistically significant. Group 1 also felt their internship prepared them better at creative thinking, information searching, leadership, oral presentation, and written communication than Group 2 did at a statistically significant level.

When examining the skills gained as a result of their internship compared to the skills gained from their overall undergraduate experience, students in Group 1 listed being better prepared at problem solving and interpersonal communication as a result of the internship, at a statistically significant level. While they credited their overall undergraduate experience more than their internship for preparing them well at oral presentation at a statistically significant level.

It was also statistically significant that the group of students who completed an internship to some degree because it was required, Group 2, felt that their internship prepared them better than their overall undergraduate experience at networking and interpersonal communication. While their overall undergraduate experience better

prepared them at job interviewing, oral presentation, resume writing, and leadership than their internship at a statistically significant level.

With consideration to the influence of time on a student's perceived value of their internship, although there were reports of changes during the internship or immediately after, how recently the students had completed their internship (that semester or years ago) did not affect their responses.

The data, both quantitative and qualitative, indicates numerous benefits of a mandatory internship program and provides strong support for the merits of its design and implementation. Nearly every attribute considered valuable in a graduate and a future employee, from work ethic to enriched communication skills, from leadership skills to networking, and from fine-tuning job application skills to enhancing awareness of the equine industry, were reported as significant benefits that resulted from a mandatory internship.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The inclusion of internships in higher education has increased significantly in recent years (Coco, 2000; Klein & Weiss, 2011). The benefits, both assumed and reported, have led to some programs making these experiences mandatory, although very little research exists that supports this policy or attempts to understand the effects of required internships (Divine et. al., 2007; Klein & Weiss, 2011). The purpose of this study was to explore mandatory internships using an equine science program at a land grant university. Specifically, this study aimed to better understand the benefits gained from required internships, student's perception of the policy of requiring them, the effects of the requirement on the experience itself, and the influence of the primary reason students participated in them.

Both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered from students who have participated in a mandatory internship. The data were compiled, analyzed, and presented in the previous chapter. Chapter 5 includes a brief review of the methodology and then provides a discussion of the results of this study as they align with existing research related to internships and where they are novel. Next, possible applications of the results of this study are discussed followed by recommendations for future research. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes with a summary of the results of this study.

Methods

This was a two part, mixed-methods study designed to explore the perceptions of past and present Equine Science and Management (ESMA) students at a major land grant institution as they reflected on their internship experience. The ESMA program was

selected in part because it has been implementing an internship requirement since 2008, the internships in this program included a wide variety of work experiences, and internships in this major have not been previously researched. The intent of the study was to deepen the understanding of the effects of a mandatory internship policy in higher education.

A mixed-methods approach was determined to be the most robust method for identifying statistically significant results and providing an in-depth understanding of these findings. Data collection consisted of an on-line survey containing both structured and open-ended questions followed by semi-structured interviews. It was determined that a sample size of 77 was necessary in order to achieve a 95% confidence level. The actual number of survey participants was 97, yielding a response rate of 25.9%. This rate is consistent with existing research that reports a typical range of 25-30% for survey research using email as the delivery method (Yun & Trumbo, 2000). The survey response rate is also consistent with research summarizing response rates for surveys that do not offer incentives, which this study did not (Fincham, 2008).

The data were analyzed and reported according to the four overarching and nine subsequent research questions that guided the study:

1. To what extent do students who have been required to complete an internship view it as beneficial? (Why or why not)
 - 1a. How satisfied are students who have completed a mandatory internship with the experience?
 - 1b. How well did students who participated in a mandatory internship feel it prepared them for certain career skills?

- 1c. Is there a relationship between how well students who completed a mandatory internship felt their internship prepared them at certain career skills compared to how their overall undergraduate experience prepared them at the same skills?
2. To what extent do students who have been required to complete a mandatory internship believe other students should also be required to do one? (Why or why not)
 - 2a. Is there a relationship between the primary reason a student completed their internship and whether they agreed or disagreed with the mandatory internship policy?
3. To what extent does a student's primary reason for going on internship correlate with their level of satisfaction with the experience?
 - 3a. Is there a relationship between the primary reason a student completed their internship and how beneficially they viewed it?
 - 3b. Is there a relationship between the primary reason a student completed their internship and job benefits?
 - 3c. Is there a relationship between the primary reason a student completed their internship and how they felt it prepared them at certain career skills?
 - 3d. Is there a relationship between the primary reason a student completed their internship and how they felt their internship prepared them at certain career skills compared to how their overall undergraduate experience prepared them at the same skills?

4. In what ways does time influence students' perception of the benefits they gained from an internship (i.e. right after they complete it, years after completing it, etc.)?

4a. Does the amount of time that has passed since completing an internship influence participant's view of the mandatory internship policy?

Discussion

At the heart of this study was an interest in determining whether mandatory internships were beneficial. Many studies have reported the benefits students gain from participating in internships, however, the majority of these studies were conducted on internships where participation was elective (Coco, 2000; Divine et al., 2007; Franzen & Hecken, 2002; Gault et al., 2000). Because of this, it was not previously established or accounted for whether the reported benefits credited to internships weren't instead influenced by a self-selection bias. This study attempted to better understand the benefits of participating in an internship when self-selection for participation was not an option.

The demographics of the sample in this study was determined to be representative of the demographics of the population being studied with respect to gender, in-state vs out-of-state tuition status, and the year of internship completion (as displayed in Chapter 4). Data regarding the traditional or non-traditional status of students in the population was not available for a comparison with the sample distribution. Furthermore, racial and socioeconomic status data were not collected for this study nor were they available for the population.

The findings in this research study suggest that many of the same benefits previously reported in elective internships also exist with mandatory internships. In addition, this

study concluded that students who have participated in a mandatory internship strongly support the policy of requiring them. Finally, this study revealed numerous ways that the primary reason a student participated in an internship influences the benefits they gained from it. The length of time since an internship occurred, whether the previous semester or nine years earlier, was found not to be a factor in students' perception of the experience, benefits gained, or the policy.

Interestingly, two important themes emerged from the data that were not directly related to the intent of this study: The role of internships in empowering students and the professionalization of students through an internship experience. All of the results are discussed more thoroughly.

Benefits of mandatory internships

As reported in Chapter 4, the vast majority of students who have participated in a required internship view the experience as beneficial. An overwhelming percentage (98%) of students who participated in this study viewed their internship experience as beneficial. Only 2% of those surveyed reported that their internship was *not beneficial*. These results are important in part because although curricular decisions are made with the students' best interest in mind, they do not always recognize the point of view of the student. Students across college campuses nationwide attend classes on a regular basis that they deem to be of little or no value, yet they are there because they were required to be. For example, at the college level many students are as frustrated with a chemistry course requirement after taking the class as they were before the semester began, sometimes even more so. But in this study, the fact that nearly every student who participated in a mandatory internship viewed it as beneficial strongly supports the

requirement from a student perspective because it indicates that the students themselves recognized its value.

A further look at why participants viewed their required internship as beneficial revealed specific benefits that were both numerous and varied, which was the focus of Research Question 1.

Experience, career clarity, and networking

The most common benefits in this study that students reported gaining from their mandatory internship were experience, career clarity, and networking. These findings were consistent with studies conducted on voluntary internships. Lubbers (2000) reported one of the main values of an internship for students was the experience they gained. Perez (2001) concluded that clarifying their career goals was one reason students participated in voluntary internships, and Gault et al. (2010) reported that participating in an internship led to better networking skills and opportunities. Although not surprising, these findings appeared to reveal a shared belief among participants that having hands-on experience was of particular importance in the equine industry.

The perceived increased value of practical experience in a specific industry reported in this study was not found in any existing studies examining the value of internships, nor could it be located in any studies related to the horse industry itself. It is possible that the results are connected to an interesting phenomenon known as the ‘endowment effect’. The ‘endowment effect’ occurs when people irrationally overvalue something, regardless of its objective value, simply because they own it (Kahneman, Knetsch, & Thaler, 1990). Most often this effect is studied and referred to in economics when examining the gap between how much a seller values something versus how much

a buyer is willing to pay for it. However, it appears in this study that once students gained hands-on experience they may have had a tendency to overvalue it. The ‘endowment effect’ may have also influenced their perceived heightened value of practical experience in the equine industry compared to other industries, simply because it is ‘their’ industry.

Learning new skills and future employment

Other internship benefits identified in this study that were consistent with existing research on elective internships include learning new skills and the internship leading to future employment (Divine et al., 2007; Gault et al., 2010; Taylor, 1988). The finding in this study that required internships were beneficial because they gave students an opportunity to apply classroom concepts in real world settings is consistent with other studies on elective internships reporting similar results (Nevett, 1985; Lam & Ching, 2007; Mounce, Mauldin, & Braun, 2004). Numerous participants in this study also reported that their mandatory internship helped them develop professionalism, increased their awareness of professional environments and office politics, and helped them realize the importance of and enhanced their ability to navigate interpersonal relationships in the work place. These findings could be considered consistent with a 1999 study by Beard and Morton across 24 communications programs offering both for-credit and not-for-credit internships that concluded that internships can improve interpersonal skills. They are also similar to studies which found internships gave students a better understanding of the world of work and helped them better adjust to it (Divine, 2007; Hyman-Parker et al., 1998).

Similarly, several participants in this study stated that their internship led to an increase in feeling responsible, which has also been reported in other internship-related

studies (Hite & Bellizzi, 1986; Hursh & Borzak, 1979). Multiple participants felt that their internship was beneficial because it helped develop their work ethic. Although not specifically mentioned in existing literature, this finding is similar to the Bernstein (1976) study reporting that graduates who had practical experience reported positive changes in feelings of personal efficacy. A number of participants in this study reported that their internship experience helped them strengthen their resume. While several previous studies also found that participating in an internship led to stronger resumes, this belief was from an external perspective such as a future employer or program supervisor (Coco, 2000, Divine et al., 2007). The finding that students themselves recognize the value of internships in strengthening their resume is unique to this study.

Finally, numerous participants in the study reported that participating in their mandatory internship increased their reputation in the industry. Although one could make the argument that resumes and reputation are obviously related, they remain two different things and the benefit of internships in building a student's reputation in the industry, as well as students' recognition of this benefit, has not been previously reported.

Prior to this study, little was known about mandatory internships or internships among equine majors. It was unknown whether the benefits often associated with internships still occurred when the internship was required and/or in a major not previously studied. The results of this study indicate that, according to students, many benefits previously reported in existing internship studies also occur in mandatory equine industry internships. Specifically, the value of practical experience, the ability to bring career clarity, the development of professionalism, gaining responsibility, and increased networking. This study also revealed several benefits students recognized that have not

been previously reported, including the ability of internships to develop work ethic, build student's reputation in the industry, and strengthen their resumes.

Satisfaction with the experience

Not only did a significant number of participants in this study view their mandatory internship as beneficial, a majority (88%) also reported being *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with the experience. At first glance, given the extensive list of benefits, the high level of satisfaction with mandatory internships found in this study would be expected. However, upon further investigation there appears to be some degree of discrepancy between how beneficially participants viewed their required internship and how satisfied they were with it. While 98% of participants viewed their internship as beneficial, only 88% reported some level of satisfaction with it. This difference is not unique. Previous studies involving client feedback across various industries have shown although how satisfied people are with something and how beneficially they view it are correlated, they are not interchangeable, and both are susceptible to self-reporting bias (Dillon, James, & Ginis 1997).

A few participants (approximately 10%) recognized the benefit of participating in a mandatory internship but were not satisfied with their particular experience. Many factors could have contributed to this. One study found that the best predictors of internship satisfaction were the work environment, supervisor support, learning opportunities, task significance, and feedback (D'abate, Youndt, & Wenzel, 2009). Another reported that monetary compensation was the biggest predictor of satisfaction (Schambach & Dirks, 2002). Both of those studies were conducted with internships that were not required which raises the question whether the difference between satisfaction

and benefits found in this study was related to, or the result of, the internship requirement. Another possibility was the variation of the internships in this study with respect to established internship satisfaction predictors. All of the factors previously identified, including work environment, supervisor support, learning opportunities, task significance, feedback, and monetary compensation, varied significantly among the internships included in this study and that variation may explain some of conflicting views between benefits and satisfaction as well as the range in levels of satisfaction.

The most common reason participants in this study cited for dissatisfaction with their internship was money. Some felt that the internship requirement had negative financial implications for students under pressure to both ‘pay the bills’ and fulfill the requirement. Other students, who participated in unpaid internships, expressed frustration with the lack of monetary compensation. Similar sentiments have been reported in other studies exploring student perspectives of their internship, including one study where a cohort of students reportedly viewed internships as a “university-supported industrial conspiracy to co-opt talented professional labor at below market wages” and another study that identified monetary compensation (or lack thereof) as a predictor of internship success (Beard & Morton, 1999; Schambach & Dirks, 2002).

The fact that some participants expressed a negative perception of their required internship due to financial concerns is not surprising and should be fodder for academic conversations when curriculum is designed. These results could inform the development of internship requirements with respect to whether internships must be paid or unpaid. Based on this study and previous research, the lack of or insufficient monetary

compensation can negatively impact students' perception of their internship experience and should be addressed.

Another theme that emerged from the data related to decreased levels of internship satisfaction was time. More than one participant felt that the time constraints of the internship requirement (when it had to be completed and the amount of time that it required) could be stressful. This finding contradicted a recent study conducted on voluntary internships that reported interns successfully developed skills including time management and the ability to prioritize tasks (Milhail, 2006). It is unclear whether the discrepancy is related to the internship requirement (the Milhail study was conducted on voluntary internships) or if the differences were a consequence of cultural differences, (the Milhail study was conducted in Greece), or if the difference was connected to variations in sample size (Milhail only studied 11 interns). Regardless of the reason, student's perception in this study that time constraints negatively impact internships has been previously unreported. Further research is necessary to establish the prevalence of this perception, the extent to which time constraints negatively impact internship experiences, and whether perception occurs among all internships or if it is specific to required internships.

For the most part, participants in this study reported high levels of satisfaction with mandatory internships. The limited reports of dissatisfaction were all related to time and/or money. No reports of dissatisfaction arose related to the type of work involved or personnel issues. This was somewhat surprising due to the frequent involvement of menial tasks such as mucking stalls and the occasional occurrence of personality conflicts between interns and their bosses or other employees.

Career skills gained

Few studies have employed empirical data or scientific assessment to explore the relationship between internships and the development of valuable career skills (Gault et al., 2000). Even fewer have attempted to measure whether internships do, in fact, better prepare students for entry into the workforce and if so, with what skills interns are better prepared. Also lacking are studies that seek to separate how mandatory internships specifically prepare students for certain skills compared to how their overall university experience prepared them at the same skills (Gault et al., 2000).

This study examined this relationship using 11 skills previously identified by both employers and students for their perceived value in evaluating potential employees and predicting early career success (Kelley & Gaedeke, 1990; Karakaya & Karakaya, 1996). The results revealed that students who participated in mandatory internships felt that their internship provided a higher level of career preparation in seven skills than did their overall university experience, at a statistically significant level. Those skills were *problem solving*, *job interviewing*, *job networking*, *resume writing*, *oral presentation*, *interpersonal communication*, and *written communication*. Conversely, participants felt their overall university experience better prepared them at *teamwork* and *leadership* than their internship at a statistically significant level. There was no difference between how internships or the overall undergraduate experience prepared students at *creative thinking* or *information searching*.

These results differed from a previous study comparing interns and non-interns. In Gault et al. (2000) interns reported a statistically significant higher level of preparation from their internship than their overall undergraduate experience for *creative thinking*,

job interviewing, and *job networking*. They rated the university higher in preparing them for *oral communication* at a statistically significant level (Gault et al., 2000). While both that study and this study found an increased value of internships in preparing students for *job interviewing* and *job networking*, the similarities end there. There are several possible reasons that participants in this study reported higher levels of preparation in more skills at a statistically significant level than the previous study. These reasons include self-reporting bias, the influence of socially desirable responding, the inherent variability of interpreting survey research, and the influence of the assignments that accompanied the internships in this study.

First, some participants may have reported a higher level of skill development by their internship in this study because of self-reporting bias. Survey research is always susceptible to self-reporting bias (Hebert, Clemow, Pbert, Ockene, & Ockene, 1995). Self-reporting bias exists when research participants under-report behaviors deemed inappropriate by researchers and over-report behaviors viewed as appropriate (Hebert et al., 1995). It is believed that the self-reporting bias occurs most often in organizational behavior research when employees believe there is possibility that employers could gain access to their responses (Hebert et al., 1995). The existence of a self-reporting bias in this study, where participants sought to over-report the value of their internship and/or under-report the value of their overall undergraduate experience, could have been influenced by the role of the researcher who was also the internship coordinator and still in a position of authority regarding current students.

Second, the results of this study could have been influenced by socially desirable responding (SDR) (Van de Mortel, 2008). SDR refers to the tendency of people to

present a favorable view of themselves when completing questionnaires and confounds research results by creating false relationships or obscuring relationships between variables (Van de Mortel, 2008). It is conceivable that participants in this study felt that it was more socially desirable (due in part to the role of the researcher and to the subject of the survey) to report that their internship better prepared them at career skills than their overall undergraduate experience.

Third, the exploratory nature of survey research makes it susceptible to a variety of interpretations. On one hand, one could conclude based on this study that the differences between how internships and the overall university experience prepare students with certain skills do indeed exist. On the other hand, it is possible that the concentrated time frame of internships, the novelty of experiences afforded by them, the increased exposure to skills already learned at the university and/or the focused reflection inherent in them impacts their perceived value when compared to something so abstract and overarching as one's entire undergraduate experience. Although statistically significant, one must proceed with caution when interpreting these results without further verifying their validity.

Fourth, the higher level of skill development from their internship, as reported by participants in this study, may actually exist but may have been the result of the accompanying assignments as opposed to the work experience or internship requirement. Internships facilitated through higher education institutions often combine work experience with academic credit. The components involved in granting academic credit vary significantly from school to school, program to program, and internship to internship. This study did not attempt to separate the specific skills gained from the

internship work from those gained through the assignments. For example, the required communications (in the form of meetings and evaluations) between the intern and employer may have increased students perception of how their internship prepared them at interpersonal communication or it could have been the unintentionally interactions they had with other employees. Likewise, the written reflection papers for this internship requirement may account for the perceived increased value in written communication, or it could have also been the written work they did for their company such as emails or reports.

This study did explore the influence of the particular assignments specific to this internship and found them to be significant (a more complete discussion of this can be found later in the chapter). Therefore, the role of the assignments that accompanied the internships in this study must be considered when interpreting the results related to the skills gained.

Given all of these considerations, the results did reveal statistically significant differences in the skills developed by their internship and those developed by their overall university experience by participants. The strength of the statistically significant results found in this study lies in part in the extensive variety of internship experiences included. Although they were all within the same major and industry, they ranged significantly from paid to unpaid, hands-on to office work, local to international, durations ranging from three weeks to almost a year, and familiar to novel. Yet, across all of these variables, participants reported a statistically significant increased value in their internship preparing them at seven valuable career skills (*problem solving, job interviewing, job networking, resume writing, oral presentation, interpersonal*

communication, and *written communication*) when compared to their overall undergraduate experience. They also reported a statistically significant increase in their university experience preparing them at two skills (*teamwork* and *leadership*) when compared to their internship experience. It would be a stretch to conclude that all internships better prepare all students at these skills. But one could conclude that internships across a wide range of experiences which involve the same or similar academic assignments as those used in this study could produce similar results.

Perception of the internship policy

Students' perception of the policy of requiring an internship was also of particular interest in this study and the impetus behind Research Question 2. The results revealed that students who had participated in a mandatory internship overwhelmingly supported the policy. Ninety-six percent of the participants in this study *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that at least one internship should be required for every student. Their support for the policy was based on the perceived benefits of internships previously discussed as well as the specific effects that requiring an internship had on the experience. Unfortunately, there exists scarce research related to the policy or effects of requiring internships with which to compare these particular results. However, this study revealed that not only did the vast majority of participants support the policy, but they indicated that the requirement itself and the accompanying assignments positively influenced their internship experience. A discussion of the reasons given by participants for supporting the policy is provided below.

The value of practical experience

The most frequently given reason for supporting the mandatory internship policy cited in this study was the perceived value of practical experience. Of course, the benefit of hands-on experience is nothing new when it comes to internship benefits (Cook et al., 2004; Weible, 2009). However, there appeared to be a common belief among participants that hands-on or real world experience is of particular importance in the equine industry. The exact basis for this perception was not identified but one explanation could be the extreme difference between learning about a 1200 lb. animal and coming face-to-face with one. In many ways this difference dwarfs the difference between learning about business or communication concepts (the two most frequently researched types of internships) and actually applying them. The common perception that hands-on industry experience is more valuable in the equine industry may be supported by the fact that mistakes made when people work with horses can literally be life or death for both. Further comparisons with other hands-on internships, feedback from industry leaders, or examination of the personal experiences that led to this conclusion regarding the importance of internships in the equine industry, would be of value and better inform this discussion.

Forced out of comfort zone

The perceived value of the internship requirement in forcing students outside of their comfort zone was significant and reported consistently throughout the study. References to the comfort zone were frequently given when the participants discussed how they benefited from the mandatory internship policy, why they recommended keeping the policy, how they would expand on the existing policy if it was up to them,

and why students should not be able to test out of the required internship. This benefit could not be found anywhere in the existing body of internship-related research and appears to be unique to the phenomena of requiring internships.

Those who reported this benefit felt that being required to complete an internship forced them to seek new opportunities they might have otherwise ignored and to try new things. A majority of students who stated that if it was up to them they would require more than one internship said that one should be an internship related to something the students are interested in and the other should be outside their comfort zone.

Furthermore, when asked if students should be allowed to test out of the internship requirement, nearly every participant who said that they should not went on to explain how instead of bypassing the requirement, students with a significant amount of prior experience in the industry should be “forced to do an internship outside their comfort area”. The novelty of this benefit, stepping outside one’s comfort zone, the repetitive nature with which it was reported, and the lack of its existence in the literature requires further research to examine it further.

Other previously unreported benefits regarding the internship requirement included that it made a particular academic program unique and that the particular location of the program (in the heart of the ‘Horse Capital of the World’) made it especially suited for the requirement. Similarly, some participants felt that the mandatory internship policy was a good tool for recruiting students. Several participants reported that the mere fact that the internship was required increased both their and their employer’s commitment to the experience and influenced where they chose to complete

their internship since many were forced to choose a site they would not have otherwise selected.

Change in students' perceptions of the mandatory policy

The results of this study also revealed that numerous participants valued the mandatory internship policy because of their belief that without the requirement, a significant number of other students would not have completed an internship and would have missed out on the benefits. Some participants discussed this possibility for themselves but most referred to it in terms of other students. Interestingly, almost all of the participants that cited this reason noted that even students who did not initially want to participate in an internship had a positive view of the experience after being required to do so. These reports of an observable change in student's opinions of the mandatory internship requirement from negative to positive have not been previously studied or reported.

All existing research on student perceptions of internships has been conducted either right before or after the students completed them (Divine et al., 2007; Cook et al., 2004; Knemeyer & Murphy, 2002). None has been conducted on both nor has the phenomena of changes in students' perception throughout or after completing an internship been explored. The changes reported in this study were of students with an initial negative perception (of varying degrees) all of which changed to a positive perception during or after the internship experience. Further research is necessary to understand this more extensively and identify possible factors responsible for such a change.

Influence of the assignments

The ability of the assignments to influence experiential learning is considerable and has been widely documented (Lewis & Williams, 1994; Moon, 2004). There also exists a small body of research reporting that the assignments which accompany an internship can have a significant influence on the experience itself (Beard & Morton, 1999; Hite & Bellizi, 1986; Satariano & Rogers, 1979). However, the role of internship assignments in developing certain skills has not been previously researched. The results of this study echo those exploring the impact of academic assignments and strongly support the argument that the assignments that accompany an internship play an important role in the skills developed from it.

Many participants in this study reported that the requirement of the intern and employer to establish goals for the internship prior to its start was positive and impactful. This same finding has been previously reported among required and optional internships alike (Beard & Morton, 1999; Hite & Bellizi, 1986). In fact, some of the previously identified predictors of disappointment with an internship among students include unclear standards, misrepresentation of the duties of the internship, and misunderstandings related to the merits of the job (Satariano & Rogers, 1979).

This study found that establishing clear goals and objectives for an internship positively affected the experience. This study provides evidence that the process of establishing clear goals and objectives combined with the fact that the employer knew the internship was required improved communication, increased how involved an employer was, and resulted in the intern receiving more opportunities than regular interns or other employees were given. These findings were consistent with previous studies correlating

clear goals with internship success but had not been specifically identified or attributed to mandatory internships (Hite & Bellizi, 1986; Satariano & Rogers, 1979). The results are also consistent with a previous study (also conducted on voluntary internships) that determined that the learning opportunities given in an internship were a strong predictor of internship satisfaction (D'Abate, Youndt, & Wenzel, 2009).

The required questions and reflection assignments that accompanied the mandatory internship in this study also had a positive impact on the experience and student's perception of it. Several participants stated that the required questions gave them an excuse to ask questions at the internship site that they were curious about but otherwise would not have had the courage to ask. Others credited the assignment that focused on reflection with helping them take the internship more seriously, think critically about what skills they were learning, and take a step back to reflect on the experience rather than just to 'go through the motions'. Though not found in existing research related to internships specifically, these findings are consistent with the well-documented importance of reflection in experiential learning (Joplin, 1981; Kolb, 1948).

Student empowerment

The influence of the assignments used in this study combined with the designation of 'intern' appeared to empower students in a way not previously reported in internship related research nor anticipated at the start of this study. Empowering students is a goal not new to higher education and involves creating an environment with an intrinsic task motivation that helps develop a student's sense of self-efficacy and energy (Frymier, Shulman, & Houser, 1996). The literature reveals six types of empowering environments for students including small group settings, group interaction, opportunities to acquire

skills and knowledge, resources, supportive and challenging leadership, and experience (Chavis & Wandersman 1990; Bricker- Jenkins & Hooyman 1986; Rappaport 1987; Breton 1990; Keiffer 1984; Spreitzer 1995; Yeich & Levine 1992, Levine, Perkins, & Levine 1997; and Maton 1993). While internships may qualify for several of these, there exists scarce research directly linking internships to empowerment (Angelique, 2001).

To date, the only study examining the relationship between internships and empowerment focused on how exploring, identifying, and selecting their sites led to students feeling empowered (Angelique, 2001). Results of this study revealed that the assignment requiring students to play a central role in the goal setting process and the one requiring students ask a series of questions based on their established goals were frequently cited by students when explaining why they felt empowered to ask things they would not have otherwise had the ‘courage’ to ask (related to business and management) and do things they would not have otherwise felt ‘important’ enough to do (such as go to board meetings, staff meetings, client meetings, etc.).

Participants often reported that they felt just having the title of ‘intern’ separated them from other employees in the way they were treated and the opportunities they were afforded. Many indicated that they were treated differently because they were an ‘intern’ and that because of that label they felt more important, their employers communicated with them more and their direct supervisors were more interested and/or invested in their success. While the notion of empowering students is positive and certain environments have been identified that foster student empowerment, little research has examined what exactly needs to happen for students themselves to feel empowered. Results of this study indicate that the mere designation of being an intern and/or certain assignments can

empower them in ways not previously reported. Although this study sheds light on the ability of internships to empower students, more research is needed to further understand and capitalize on this.

Professionalization

Professionalization, or the development of professionalism, is a common component of medical and teaching professions (Hill, 2000). Professionalism can be defined as “conduct, aims, or qualities that characterize or mark a profession or professional person,” (Webster’s New World Dictionary, 1990). Joseph (2017) identified ten characteristics of professionalism that students should develop before graduating including workplace ethics; professional demeanor, being confident; reliability; competence; ethics; poise; phone etiquette; written correspondence; organizational skills; and accountability. Staley (2015) presented a slightly different list compiled from what employers hope students would learn in college including developing reliability and diligence, developing a problem-solving attitude, fine tuning communication skills, learning to be a team player, and respecting research skills. It has been said that these skills must be developed through professional socialization in a work environment and argued that developing true professionalism may be one of the most important and most difficult aspects of training students (Hill, 2000). Yet, despite all of this, research into the role of internships in developing professionalism outside of the medical and education fields hardly exists.

Result of this study indicate that internships in the equine industry professionalize students and that the students recognize this process. Participants reported being treated as an ‘aspiring’ professional, being mentored by industry professionals, learning to

navigate work environments, observing office politics, and having to learn how to present themselves professionally through their mandatory internship. The importance of professionalization reported by industry leaders and employers coupled with increasing pressure on higher education to provide ‘real-world’ training support the use of internships to develop professionalism. This study may help validate that professionalization of students through internships does occur, is possible, and could be better facilitated. Further research is necessary to better understand and promote the process.

Influence of primary reason for taking an internship

Of considerable importance to this study was the influence of the primary reason a student participates in an internship on their perception of the experience, view of the policy, and the career skills gained from it. These questions provided the foundation for Research Question 3. This study was able to compare two groups of interns: Those who would have participated in an internship even if it had not been mandatory, and those who likely would not have.

All existing internship-related research has either willfully omitted or neglected to consider the impact of a self-selection bias or personality-related factors among students who electively complete them on the reported benefits of internships. Self-selecting bias occurs when individuals self-select themselves into a group (Kenny, Lee, Maddala, & Trost, 1979). In the case of internships, students who choose to do them when not required to do so are an example of self-selection bias. It is possible that such students share personality traits (being outgoing, extroverted, hardworking, etc.) or other qualities (being career oriented, driven, eager to learn, etc.) that led to internship success,

are deemed valuable by employers, and/or influence the recognition or the benefits of internships. This study aimed to separate such students from students who were in some way motivated to complete their internship by the fact that it was required and compare the two groups.

Benefits and policy

The reasons behind whether or not a student participates voluntarily in an internship are important to consider when determining the benefits gained from it, especially when trying to determine what value, if any, exists in requiring internships for all students. The overwhelming majority of evidence that supports internships has been based on those that were optional, thereby making it is possible (but not previously explored) that students who self-select an internship may have a skill set that is being included in the perceived benefits (Franzen & Hecken, 2002).

There are also personality factors behind why students go on internship and what they gain from it. Individual traits such a motivation, enthusiasm, initiative, ambition, adaptability, and flexibility have been ranked as highly desirable by employers from a variety of industries, yet the influence of those traits on internships and their reported benefits has been previously overlooked or ignored (Gault et al., 2000; Kim, Ghosh, & Meng, 1993; Scott & Frontczak, 1996). This study did not seek to identify or separate out the influence of certain personality traits but rather to explore the relationship between the primary reason a student participates in an internship and the research questions.

Several statistically significant relationships related to the primary reason students participate in an internship were found. Students who would have participated in an internship even if it was not a requirement viewed it as more beneficial, were more

supportive of the mandatory internship policy, and felt that it contributed more to their current job than students who primarily completed one because it was required, at a statistically significant level. Although it makes sense that students who would have participated in an internship regardless of whether it was required have a more positive view of the benefits of internships and thus are more supportive of requiring them, it is unclear why. One possible explanation is the existence of different preexisting mindsets regarding the value of internships.

The relationship between a preexisting mindset and its influence on an experience could be explained by a recent development in the field of experiential education known as “framing” or “focus” (Jensen, 2005; Kolb, 1984). Studies indicate that simply presenting the upcoming task and/or isolating the attention of the learner *before* they engage in an experience positively affects the outcome (Jensen, 2005; Joplin, 2008). This study echoes those findings in two ways. First, numerous participants referenced how developing goals prior to the internship shaped and positively affected the experience. Second, a statistically significant relationship identified in this study revealed that students who would have participated in an internship even if it was not required reported a more positive perception of internships and the policy of requiring them.

It appears that somewhere along the way students who reported they would have participated in an internship even if it was not required had been exposed to a positive presentation of an internship prior to ever participating in one and thus went into it with a more favorable view. To determine if, in fact, “framing” related to internships occurred and if so what affect it had, more research is necessary. Specifically of interest is who or what “framed” these students so that they were willing to participate in an internship even

if they were not required to? Was it a parent, advisor, employer, experience, or peer?

Whoever or whatever it was apparently relayed a message of the value and importance of participating in an internship that impressed on them the need to do one. The influence of such framing is evident in the results of this study and warrants further research to more clearly identify why those students saw so much value in an internship that they would have completed one regardless of if they were required to do so.

Satisfaction with the internship experience

Interestingly, there was no difference between the level of satisfaction with their internship and the primary reason that a student participated in it. As discussed earlier, how satisfied one is with an experience and how beneficial they feel it was are two different things. Although there was difference between the two groups in this study and how beneficially they viewed their internship and the mandatory internship policy, the finding that there was no a difference in how satisfied they were with it reveals that regardless of why they participated in an internship students were equally satisfied with it, relatively speaking.

Measurable benefits resulting from internships

Severable measurable benefits including higher salaries, better benefits, and shorter time to full time employment have been reported as a result of internships (Coco, 2000; Gault et al., 2008; Taylor, 1988; Thiel & Hartley, 1997). Yet research comparing how interns versus non-interns fare in the entry-level job market in terms of compensation, benefit packages, and time to employment has never taken into consideration whether the internships were required or elective (Gault et al., 2000). Without considering the reason why students participated in an elective internship and

accounting for the influence of a self-selection bias, it impossible to credit any benefits primarily to the internship experience. One must include the personality traits unique to both students who would have participated in an internship without a requirement and those who would not have to isolate the benefits of the internships from confounding factors. One goal of this study was to determine whether previously reported benefits were caused by internships or simply correlated with them.

Consequently, this study compared the benefits between both groups. Results revealed that there was not a statistically significant difference between the reason a student participated in an internship and the measurable benefits they gained from it including salary, health insurance, job benefits, time to full time employment and whether or not they were employed in the equine industry. Although not conclusive, the fact that there was no difference between the groups, meaning they both recognized the same benefits, could indicate that previously reported benefits from studies conducted on voluntary internships were in fact the result of the internship itself and not the self-selection of the students who chose to do it. To understand this, one would need a population of students with a comparable degree working in the same industry who did not complete an internship to compare the results of this study with to identify the benefits gained by mandatory internships.

Career skills

The statistically significant differences identified in this study between the primary reason students participated in an internship and how well they felt it prepared them at certain career skills were numerous and complex. These relationships were found when comparing the two groups with each other and both the groups individually. The

results of comparisons between internship and overall university preparation of career skills for both groups combined (all participants) was discussed earlier when respect to the overall benefits of mandatory internships.

Comparing skill preparation between groups

When comparing how the two groups felt their internship prepared them well at certain skills, students who would have completed an internship even if it was not required felt that their internship better prepared them at *creative thinking, information searching, leadership, oral presentation, and written communication* while students who completed one to some degree because it was required did, at a statistically significant level. Interestingly, there was not a single career skill measured that students who completed an internship to some degree because it was required ranked higher than students who would have completed one regardless. So why did one student group consistently credit their internship with better preparing them at certain career skills than the other? It is possible that these results echo earlier results indicative of framing among students who would have completed an internship regardless. But there are other explanations as well, including motivation.

Although not a motivational study, one cannot interpret the results of this study, specifically those related to the primary reason students participate in an internship, without considering motivation. The role of motivation has been central to research exploring why some students thrive in learning and teaching environments and others struggle (Pintrich, 2003). According to research, people who are motivated to achieve a specific goal will be motivated to choose to do things that will achieve that goal (Wlodkowski, 1978). It is conceivable that students with certain career goals might be

motivated to do an internship because they believe it will help them achieve those goals and that motivation could lead to them crediting their internship more with helping prepare them at skills that would help achieve those goals than students who are motivated to do it for other reasons.

Simply put, if students are motivated to complete an internship because they believe it will help them achieve their career goals, they may be more likely to credit that internship with developing career related skills than students who are motivated by different reasons. Whether those students are simply more aware of the ability of an internship to develop career skills or more conditioned to think that it does is unknown. It is also unknown whether their internship actually did better prepare them at those skills or if they just thought it did, an example of the self-fulfilling prophecy. More research is needed to better understand and explain the statistically significant discrepancies reported between students who participated in internships for different reasons and the career skills they felt they gained.

Comparing internship vs undergraduate experience preparation by group

This study also aimed to isolate the career skills developed on a mandatory internship from an overall undergraduate experience. To do this, participants were asked to rank how well their internship versus their overall university experience prepared them at certain career skills. The results identified a second set of statistically significant relationships between to the primary reason a student completed an internship and how well the experience prepared them at career skills when compared to how well their overall undergraduate experience prepared them.

Students who would have participated in an internship even if it was not required felt their internship better prepared them at *problem solving* and *interpersonal communication* and their overall university experience better prepared them at *oral presentation*. While students who completed one to some degree because it was required felt their internship better prepared them at *job networking* and *interpersonal communication* and their overall undergraduate experience better prepared them at *job interviewing*, *oral presentation*, *resume writing*, and *leadership*. Thus, both groups felt their internship better prepared them at *interpersonal communication* and their overall undergraduate experience better prepared them at *oral presentation*. These results are consistent with previous research that found internships build interpersonal skills and familiarize students with workplace dynamics (Beard & Morton, 1999; Divine et al., 2007). They are also consistent with the results of a similar study conducted on internships that were not required where students also identified their university experience at better preparing them at *oral presentation* at a statistically significant level (Gault et al., 2000). However, the similarities end there.

Students who would have participated in an internship even if it had not been required felt that their internship better prepared them at *problem solving*, unlike students who participated to some degree because it was required who felt that their internship better prepared them at *job networking*. There does not appear to be any existing research or educational theory that explains the statistically significant difference between the two groups perceptions of the internship at developing *problem solving* skills. There is, however, one study related to how well internships develop job networking, and its findings directly contradict the results of this study (Klein & Weiss, 2011). In that study,

researchers determined that students from lower educational backgrounds have more difficulties entering the workforce than their peers whose parents have more extensive social networks; but when internships were required to help them build social networks they were unsuccessful in doing so (Klein & Weiss, 2011). Thus the perception that their internship better prepared them at *job networking* among students who primarily participated because they were required challenges the results of that study which found no value in requiring internships (Klein & Weiss, 2011).

Several differences could explain the discrepancy between the results of that study and the results of this one (Klein & Weiss, 2011). Most notably, they were conducted with students with different demographics seeking different degrees in different countries. Still, it cannot be overlooked that the perceived value of internships in developing *job networking* skills among students in this study who only participated because they were required to do so strongly supports a mandatory internship policy. It's one thing to base requiring an internship on its perceived benefits, but it is another thing altogether to base requiring it on the benefits being recognized by those intended to receive them.

If job networking can level the playing field when it comes to social capital, as previously suggested, and if networking is as valuable in the equine industry as participants in this study believe it is, then the results of this study indicate that requiring an internship is valuable because it builds important networking skills among students who might not otherwise develop them. In addition, the benefit of internships at developing *problem solving* skills among students who would have participated in an internship even if not required cannot be overlooked. These students may not need a

mandatory internship policy in place to recognize the benefits of an internship, but the results of this study indicate that they benefit from mandatory internships in a unique, important, and statistically significant way.

Of considerable intrigue in the results of this study was the finding that students who participated in an internship primarily because it was required credited their university experience more than their internship at preparing them at four career skills (*job interviewing, resume writing, leadership, and oral presentation*). The perception that the university better developing *oral presentation* skills was consistent across both groups in this study and discussed previously. However, the remaining three essential career skills, *job interviewing, resume writing, and leadership* that this group of students credited more to their overall undergraduate experience than their internship is noteworthy. The design of this study did not allow for the reasons behind this reported difference to be identified but instead warrants further research to fully understand this phenomenon.

The fact that both groups in this study, as well as students in a previous study conducted on elective internships, all felt their university experience better prepared them at *oral presentation* at a statistically significant level strongly supports the validity of this finding. The consistency between both groups who participated in their internship for different reasons and the belief that the internship better prepared them at *interpersonal communication* also strengthens the argument that this finding is actual and not just perceived. However, the similarities between career skills gained end there.

The significance of the results in this study related to the development of career skills and the primary reason a student participates in an internship lies less in the fact

that mandatory internships were more successful at building certain career skills and the university experience was more successful in developing others specific to each group studied. More importantly, these differences were not minute or happenstance, but statistically significant. Such significance raises many questions. Where did they learn these skills on their internship – from the overall experience, from the assignments, from observation, from their supervisors? Where did they learn them during their university experience - in their classes, from an advisor, through other extracurricular activities? Why, if they learned some of these important skills more from their overall undergraduate experience, were both groups still so supportive of the mandatory internship policy? And why did both groups studied report gaining some similar and some different skills from both their internship and their undergraduate experience?

That both samples indicated a statistically significant higher level of preparation at *oral presentation* from their university experience supports that this difference could be consistent across degrees and universities. In this study, students were identified according to whether they would have participated in an internship even if it was not required or if they participated to some degree because it was required. Structural differences aside, such framework suggests that the reason a student completes an internship could conceivably influence the benefits gained from it (Klein & Weiss, 2011). Further research is necessary to offer much needed insight and the ability to better interpret these results.

Not only were there relationships between the career skills gained in this study and the primary reason that students completed an internship, they were numerous, statistically significant, and previously unreported. These relationship were both within

groups and between groups. They require more data, follow-up questions, and more research to fully understand. What can be concluded from the results is that some career skills like *interpersonal communication* may be developed by internships regardless of the primary reason why students complete them, and others such as *problem solving* and *job networking* may be developed for some and not for others. Whether related to motivation or social capital or the accompanying assignments or something else altogether, the results of this study echo and expand on previous studies that indicate that the reason that a student completes an internship may very well influence the benefits gained from it (Klein & Weiss, 2011).

The influence of time

Research Question 4 asked whether survey responses would differ depending on whether the experience was completed recently or had been undertaken years ago. There was no statistical significance in the results regarding how beneficial participants felt their internship was, how much they believed it contributed to their current job, how supportive they were of the mandatory internship policy, or how well they felt it prepared them at any career skills, that was attributed to the time differential. It is heartening to know that students' very positive reactions to the value of the internship experience and support of the mandatory internship policy, described in detail in previous sections of this chapter, did not change as the years passed.

Applications

Several applications, both broad and specific, exist based on the results of this study.

Informing curricular decisions

The results of this study can be used to inform curricular decisions surrounding the decision to offer or require internships. Implementing a mandatory internship policy is a considerable investment in terms of the personnel, resources, and time necessary to manage it (Gault et. al., 2008). Previously, these decisions were made in the absence of supporting research. The results of this study provide insight into the potential benefits of mandatory internships and also offer specific ways to facilitate and frame them.

Support for mandatory internships

The data in this study largely support implementing a mandatory internship policy. Results offer a range of benefits possible, the actual value recognized by students, and students' perspectives on the policy. The statistically significant results including how overwhelmingly positive students viewed their mandatory internship experience and the mandatory internship policy, thus providing curriculum committees much needed insight into the student perspectives related to such a policy and what they may gain from it. There is no evidence in the literature that student perspectives have been previously considered when making curricular decisions related to internships.

Departments could use the results of this study to justify the considerably investment necessary to implement a mandatory internship policy or at the very least demonstrate support for doing so. Programs with existing internship requirements may use the results of this study to better understand the benefits of doing so, evaluate the framework of their program, and/or understand the influence of the requirement on different students.

Financial constraints

The fact that some participants expressed a negative perception of their required internship due to financial concerns is not surprising and should be worthy of academic conversations when curriculum is designed. These results could inform programs when development of internship requirements with respect to whether internships must be paid or unpaid. Based on this study and previous research, lack of or insufficient monetary compensation can negatively impact students' perception of their internship experience and should be considered.

The importance of “framing”

The results of this study highlight the importance of a ‘framing’ with respect to internships, a finding that can be applied to existing or developing internship programs. With respect to the structure guiding internships and the academic assignments that accompany them, this study revealed that framing the internship experience by requiring the intern and employer to establish a mutual set of goals prior to beginning the internship positively impacted and helped guide the experience. The internship coordinator for the university can be directly involved in this framing by facilitating such a meeting or they can be less involved and simply require it. Either way, based on this study, the goal setting process is valuable and both developing and existing internship programs should consider including it.

Results also suggest that some level of framing exists among students who would participate in an internship even if not required and that framing positively impacts the experience. Although pinpointing exactly where or how this framing took place was beyond the scope of this study, it was revealed that framing from an outside source

(advisor, parent, industry leader, etc.) about the importance of an internship may lead to a more positive view of how beneficial the internship was. It can also influence how much students believed the internship developed certain career skills.

Therefore, internship coordinators, faculty, and programs could use the results of this study related to framing to develop or shape coursework taken prior to an internship. For example, guest lecturers could be encouraged to discuss the value of internships in classes required by all students. Or an internship pre-requisite could be developed to inform students of the wide range of benefits other students have gained from an internship, what they can expect from the experience, and what skills they may develop. At the most basic level, advisors informing students about an internship requirement could engage in some level of framing by sharing the intended value of the experience and/or the results of this study. According to this study, investing in framing of the internship experience positively affects student's perception of it and the benefits gained.

The value of assignments

Although not perfect, results of this study did indicate that the assignments used positively impacted the experience and were deemed by some students as particularly beneficial. Existing or developing programs could use the assignments outlined in this study (goal sheet, hours log, learning contract, required questions, reflection paper, student evaluation, and/or supervisor evaluation) to shape their own. These results could be applied on a case by case basis where students participating in an internship could take a skills assessment to identify career skills they would like to or need to develop and the assignments could then be tailored to meet those needs. For example, a student that desires or is identified as needing to develop stronger oral or interpersonal skills could be

assigned with a longer list or more detailed required questions. Similarly, a student seeking or needing to develop a job network could be assigned to identify and recruit a certain number of individuals to their personal network. There exist numerous examples along these lines and even more ways that the tools and results from this study could be applied.

Empowering and professionalizing students

Results of this study revealed new ways that internships can be utilized, most notably as a means of empowering and professionalizing students. The findings that students felt empowered by the title of ‘intern’ and through some of the assignments used in this study. They also reveal that students recognized the value of their internship in developing professionalism. Both of these results may help inform internship development (what assignments to use) and guiding framework (how to ‘frame’ students for what to expect from their internship experience). The results also warrant further research into the role of internships can play in both of these important processes.

Considerations for applications

The overwhelmingly positive results regarding mandatory internships cannot be overlooked when considering the applications of this study. On one hand, it is possible that the results were so positive because the participants in this study self-selected and students who had a good internship experience or those with a more favorable view of internships were more inclined to participate. On the other hand, perhaps participants deemed positive feedback to be more socially desirable and thus skewed the results. Even if true, neither explanation completely negates the results. Such biases were considered

and care was taken when selecting the purposeful sample for follow up interviews to ensure that all negative perceptions represented were included in the data set.

One can also not ignore the difference between statistical significance and practical significance when considering the results or recommendations of this study. For example, although there is a statistical difference between 100% of one group agreeing with the mandatory internship policy and 93% of the other group agreeing with it, practically speaking both groups were strongly supportive of it. The same consideration should be made when evaluating the career skill data. Although there were statistically significant differences between the career skills gained from an internship versus those from an overall undergraduate experience and between groups, the practical application is to recognize the overarching theme that internships can uniquely develop skills for some individuals different than the skills internships may develop for others.

The larger, take-away applications of this study inform how to structure internships, the added value of framing them, and how to facilitate career skill development through them. The results also demonstrate, at least in some cases, that students recognize the benefits of required courses after completing them.

Recommendations for further research

In some ways this study raised more questions than it answered. It revealed a noticeable range of benefits, some previously unreported, that accompany mandatory internships, but did not explain the perception that industry experience is more valuable in equine careers. It revealed that students who participated in a mandatory internship were strongly supportive of the policy, but also found negative perceptions related to time and money, not previously reported, that could inhibit implementing one and demand

attention. It identified statistically significant differences between students who would participate in an internship even if it was not required and those who likely would not, but offers little to explain those differences or isolate the cause. As with all research, and especially that of an exploratory nature, more research is needed to better understand the results of this study. The following recommendations for further research can be made.

For example, based on this study, one could conclude that mandatory internships are beneficial to almost all students. Yet it remains unclear the role that the work experience versus the accompanying assignments play in achieving those benefits. A study comparing mandatory internships that involve different assignments could help distinguish the particular role that individual assignments play and might further identify other assignments that result in different benefits than those identified in this study.

Furthermore, while some may conclude that internships are an effective way at empowering and professionalizing students based on the results of this study, more research is necessary to more clearly establish this. Are all students empowered by internships? What role did the assignments play in making students feel empowered and can they be incorporated into other elements of curriculum other than internships such as job shadowing, studying abroad or community service projects? What ways can professionalization through internships be maximized and reflected on? These questions and more can only be answered by further research.

The common perception among participants in this study, that hands-on industry experience is more valuable in the equine industry, may be supported by the fact that mistakes made when people work with horses can literally be life or death for both, but this is not the only field where this is the case. Other careers, such as law enforcement,

carry much higher risks and not all of them require that internships as part of their curricular training. Still, more research is needed to better understand if the increased value of experience in the equine industry reported in this study is real or perceived. Comparisons with the value of hands-on experience in other fields, feedback from industry leaders, and/or identifying the personal experiences that led to this conclusion, would be valuable and better able to inform this discussion.

Similarly, the novel finding in this study that mandatory internships are beneficial because they force students to step outside their comfort zone, the frequency with which this benefit was reported, and the lack of its existence in the literature necessitates further research to better understand how being forced outside their comfort zone benefits students and what can be done to best capitalize on this benefit.

Research is also needed to better understand the influence of time constraints on internships. Though limited, student's concerns related to time that were identified in this study were previously unreported. Students participated in the internships in this study at different times during their university career, during the school year and during the summer, and over different lengths of time. Further research is necessary to establish the frequency and extent to which time constraints negatively impact internship experiences, and whether this occurs among all internships or if it is specific to required internships.

When comparing students who would have participated in an internship even if not required with students who participated to some degree because it was required, results of this study revealed that both groups gained different skills from the experience. First of all, further research is necessary to determine if these results are repeatable. If they are, research is needed to understand the relationship between the skills a student

gains from an internship and the primary reason they participate in it. Finally, it would be valuable to study if internships and/or their accompanying assignments can be tailored to develop certain skills, because if so, internships could be customized to meet students' individual needs.

This study found that many students changed their perceptions regarding the importance of internships during their internship experience or shortly after it, and in every instance the change was positive. It would be interesting to determine what exactly happened to make students have a more favorable view of internships. Participants in this study also reported that their internship developed skills beneficial for a career in the equine industry. It would be interesting to investigate whether students with part or full-time jobs saw the same value in their work experiences as those with internships.

This study also offers valuable insight for improving the methodology of future research in this field. For example, the comparison between the skills gained from an internship separate from skills gained through an overall undergraduate experience could be more conclusive if the Likert scales for each skill were listed horizontally next to each other in a survey. This format would better allow participants to rate their internship and their overall undergraduate experience at the same time according to each skill developed rather than rating all of the skills for the internship first followed by all of the skills for the overall undergraduate experience – as was the format in this study. Also comparisons between the two would be more conclusive if the wording for the overall undergraduate experience specifically excluded the internship experience.

In some ways, this study revealed just how little is known about mandatory internships, their benefits, and students' perceptions of them. But it also provides the

framework needed guide future research. If students who will not participate in an internship unless required stand gain significant and career-oriented benefits if they did – as this study indicates – then more research is warranted to better understand, justify, and implement a mandatory internship policy.

Conclusion

So what does it all mean? What are the answers to the four main research questions? Are mandatory internship beneficial? According to the results of this study, yes. They have many of the same benefits already been associated with elective internships and even carry some not found in a voluntary internship experiences. Do students who have been required to participate in an internship view the policy as beneficial? According to the results of this study, yes. Overall, students who have participated in a mandatory internship have a favorable view of the policy. Does the primary reason that students participate in an internship influence how beneficially they view it, their perception of the mandatory internship policy, and the career skills developed by it? According to the results of this study, yes, yes, and yes. Finally, does a student's perception of the benefits of a mandatory internship or the policy of requiring internships change over time? According to the results of this study, no. There was no relationship between when a student completed an internship and their perception of the benefits associated with it or their perception of the mandatory internship policy.

It appears that mandatory internships are beneficial for almost all students who participate in them and that students largely support the policy of requiring internships – after having completed one. This study demonstrated that students who participated in a mandatory internship were able to differentiate the career skills they gained from it from

those gained from their overall university experience and it identified several skills that their internship statistically significantly better prepared them at. Finally, this study suggests that mandatory internships can develop specific career skills for students who would participate in them even if not required and those who complete them to some degree because they are required.

As an increasing number of colleges and universities promote an internship experience for their students, it is essential that these experiences are worth the faculty and staff commitment, the considerable departmental resources, the demands on stakeholders, and the students' time, effort, and money. The results of this study strongly support, through both qualitative data and at a statistically significant level, the value of mandatory internships and their role in developing skills identified as important to career success. They also reveal benefits of mandatory internships not previously identified including their ability to empower students and develop professionalism. The results of this study add to the empirical body of research that asks the age-old curricular question: How do we best prepare our graduates to become the alumni we are proud to claim?

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

IRB Approval

EXEMPTION CERTIFICATION

MEMO: Elizabeth James,
Animal and Food Science
N212D Ag Science North
0091
PI phone #: (859)257-0166

FROM: Institutional Review Board
c/o Office of Research Integrity

SUBJECT: Exemption Certification for Protocol No. 17-0365-X4B

DATE: June 1, 2017

On May 24, 2017, it was determined that your project entitled, *Investigating the implications of required internships*, meets federal criteria to qualify as an exempt study.

Because the study has been certified as exempt, you will not be required to complete continuation or final review reports. However, it is your responsibility to notify the IRB prior to making any changes to the study. Please note that changes made to an exempt protocol may disqualify it from exempt status and may require an expedited or full review.

The Office of Research Integrity will hold your exemption application for six years. Before the end of the sixth year, you will be notified that your file will be closed and the application destroyed. If your project is still ongoing, you will need to contact the Office of Research Integrity upon receipt of that letter and follow the instructions for completing a new exemption application. It is, therefore, important that you keep your address current with the Office of Research Integrity.

For information describing investigator responsibilities after obtaining IRB approval, download and read the document "PI Guidance to Responsibilities, Qualifications, Records and Documentation of Human Subjects Research" from the Office of Research Integrity's IRB Survival Handbook web page [<http://www.research.uky.edu/ori/IRB-Survival-Handbook.html#PIresponsibilities>]. Additional information regarding IRB review, federal regulations, and institutional policies may be found through ORI's web site [<http://www.research.uky.edu/ori/>]. If you have questions, need additional information, or would like a paper copy of the above mentioned document, contact the Office of Research Integrity at (859) 257-9428.

see blue.

315 Kinkead Hall | Lexington, KY 40506-0057 | P: 859-257-9428 | F: 859-257-8995 |
www.research.uky.edu/ori/
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APPENDIX B

EQM 399 – Equine Science & Management Internship Syllabus

EQM 399

Equine Science and Management Internship

Course Description

The equine internship is designed to provide students with hands on experience in the equine industry. An internship is an educational experience that allows students to apply concepts learned in the classroom in an industry setting that is supervised and approved by the instructor.

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Instructor: | Elizabeth A. James, M.S. |
| Office: | N212D Ag. Science North |
| Phone: | 859-351-3558 |
| Fax: | 859-3238484 |
| E-mail: | elizabeth.labonty@uky.edu |

Pre-requisites

Junior standing and:

1. Minimum of 60 earned credits
2. At least 12 hours of EQM core courses
3. Minimum GPA of 2.0 or above
4. Internship site approval by the instructor
5. Prerequisites: EQM 101, EQM 105, ASC 310, ASC 320 or instructor approval

Course Objectives

To provide students the opportunity to apply concepts learned in class and gain hands-on experience necessary for a career in the equine industry. Upon completion of this course students will have:

- Gained practical experience in an area of interest in the horse industry.
- An understanding of the day to day activities associated with a career in the equine industry.
- Developed and refined written and verbal communications skills
- Applied concepts learned in class to critically evaluate situations and make informed management decisions.

Evaluation and Grading

Evaluations and grades will be determined by completion of the following:

1. A completed and signed Internship Contract turned in within one week of starting the internship.
 - a. The Internship Contract must be completed by the student, typed, signed by the faculty supervisor, DUS, and Associate Dean of the College of Agriculture, Food, and the Environment.
2. Goals Sheet
 - a. A list of 3-5 goals from students and 3-5 goals from internship site must be agreed upon and typed up prior to starting the internships
 - b. The Goals Sheet must be signed and dated by both student and internship supervisor, and turned in within one week of starting the internship.
 - c. Questions List
 - i. A list of questions that must be asked while on the internship will be developed by the student and Internship Coordinator within a week of receiving the Goals Sheet. Students can ask the questions at any point during the internship.
3. Hours Log
 - a. A log of when the 150 work hours were completed, signed off by the internship supervisor.
4. A mid-term on-site visit when possible or phone call/email evaluation.
5. Reflection Paper
 - a. A 3-5 page paper discussing:
 - i. How were the goals of the internship met?
 - ii. A summary of the answers to the Questions List.
 - iii. What was learned while on internship?
 - iv. What made the internship educational and what could have made it more successful?
 - v. How the internship influenced your future career?
6. At least 4 pictures of the student performing duties during the internship.
7. Student Evaluation
 - a. An evaluation of the student by the internship supervisor.
8. Supervisor Evaluation
 - a. An evaluation of the internship by the student.

Note: All assignments are to be submitted to the instructor by the agreed date to receive credit.

Grading Scale

| | |
|-----|----------|
| A = | > 90% |
| B = | 80 - 89% |
| C = | 70 - 79% |
| D = | 65 - 69% |

Grading Policies

- Late work will not be accepted and no makeup assignments will be allowed.
- Quitting the internship or being fired will result in an E for EQM 399.
- Not turning in any of the assignments will result in lowering the final grade one letter grade.

Academic Integrity

Scholastic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Forms of scholastic dishonesty include, but are not limited to: plagiarism (copying or using someone else's work as your own), utilization of unauthorized materials during academic evaluations. A first offense will result in a grade of 0 for that particular assignment, and may result in failure of the course. If previous evidence of academic dishonesty exists, then the first offense may result directly in failure of the course.

For more information, see Part II, Section 6.3 through 6.4.3 of the "Code of Student Conduct" (<http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Code/part2.html>).

APPENDIX C

Part 1: ESMA Internship Survey

Equine Science and Management Internship Survey

Please complete the survey below.

Your time and participation is greatly appreciated. Thank you!

What year were you born?

- ☐ 1957
- ☐ 1958
- ☐ 1959
- ☐ 1960
- ☐ 1961
- ☐ 1962
- ☐ 1963
- ☐ 1964
- ☐ 1965
- ☐ 1966
- ☐ 1967
- ☐ 1968
- ☐ 1969
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- ☐ 1987
- ☐ 1988
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- ☐ 1991
- ☐ 1992
- ☐ 1993
- ☐ 1994
- ☐ 1995
- ☐ 1996
- ☐ 1997
- ☐ 1998
- ☐ 1999
- ☐ 2000

What is your gender?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

Are you currently a student at the University of Kentucky?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

- What year did you graduate?
- ☐ 2006
☐ 2007
☐ 2008
☐ 2009
☐ 2010
☐ 2011
☐ 2012
☐ 2013
☐ 2014
☐ 2015
☐ 2016
☐ 2017
- Are you an in-state or out-of-state student?
- ☐ In-state
☐ Out-of-state
- Were you an in-state or out-of-state student?
- ☐ In-state
☐ Out-of-state
- What is your current cumulative GPA?
- ☐ 3.5 - 4.0
☐ 3.0 - 3.4
☐ 2.5 - 2.9
☐ 2.0 - 2.4
☐ 1.5 - 1.9
☐ 1.0 - 1.4
☐ 0.5 - 0.9
☐ 0.0 - 0.4
- What was your cumulative college GPA?
- ☐ 3.5 - 4.0
☐ 3.0 - 3.4
☐ 2.5 - 2.9
☐ 2.0 - 2.4
☐ 1.5 - 1.9
☐ 1.0 - 1.4
☐ 0.5 - 0.9
☐ 0.0 - 0.4
- What year in school are you?
- ☐ Freshman
☐ Sophomore
☐ Junior
☐ Senior
- What year did you complete your internship?
- ☐ 2008
☐ 2009
☐ 2010
☐ 2011
☐ 2012
☐ 2013
☐ 2014
☐ 2015
☐ 2016
☐ 2017
- How many years of equine-related work experience did you have prior to your internship?
- ☐ 2 or fewer years
☐ 3-5 years
☐ 6-8 years
☐ 9 or more years
- How many years of non-equine related work experience did you have prior to your EQM 399 internship?
- ☐ 2 or fewer years
☐ 3-5 years
☐ 6-8 years
☐ 9 or more years

How many months passed between when you graduated and when you started your first full time job?

- ☐ 0-3 months
☐ 4-6 months
☐ 7-9 months
☐ 10-12 months
☐ More than 12 months

Was your first full-time job after graduating equine-related?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

What benefits do you have at your current job? (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ Health insurance
☐ Retirement plan
☐ Vacation time
☐ Housing
☐ Cell phone
☐ Automobile
☐ Laptop or Ipad
☐ Other

Please specify what other benefits you have with your current job?

What is your current salary range?

- ☐ Less than \$25,000
☐ \$25,000 - \$34,999
☐ \$35,000 - \$49,999
☐ \$50,000 - \$74,999
☐ \$75,000 - \$99,999
☐ \$100,000 - \$149,000
☐ \$150,000 or more

How much do you believe your EQM 399 experience contributed to you obtaining your current job?

- ☐ Did not contribute at all
☐ Contributed somewhat
☐ Contributed considerably

How satisfied are you with your current job?

- ☐ Very satisfied
☐ Satisfied
☐ Neither satisfied or unsatisfied
☐ Unsatisfied
☐ Very unsatisfied

Which category below best classifies the type of work you performed while on internship? (Please choose the category that best describes the majority of the work that you performed.)

- ☐ Thoroughbred Industry - Hands-on
☐ Thoroughbred Industry - Office work
☐ Sport Horse Industry - Hands-on
☐ Sport Horse Industry - Office work
☐ Western Breed or Discipline - Hands-on
☐ Western Breed or Discipline - Office work
☐ Veterinary Related - Hands-on
☐ Veterinary Related - Office work
☐ Breed or Discipline Organization - Office work
☐ Retraining/Re-homing Organization
☐ Equine Therapeutic/Rehabilitation
☐ Equine Assisted Therapy
☐ Research
☐ Extension
☐ Teaching
☐ Boarding Facility
☐ Lessons
☐ Other

Please specify what other type of work you performed while on your internship?

How invested in your internship experience was your immediate supervisor at the business where you interned?

- ☐ Completely invested
☐ Very invested
☐ Somewhat invested
☐ Slightly invested
☐ Not invested at all

Please take a moment to consider the reason(s) why you participated in your EQM 399 internship. Please select the most important reason for why you completed your EQM 399 internship.

- ☐ I wanted to gain industry experience
☐ I wanted to build my network
☐ I was trying to decide what I wanted to do when I graduate
☐ It was required to graduate
☐ I wanted to strengthen my resume
☐ I was encouraged to do an internship by someone such as an advisor, professor, parent, etc.
☐ Other

Please take a moment to consider the reason(s) why you participated in your EQM 399 internship. Please select the second most important reason for why you completed your EQM 399 internship.

- ☐ I wanted to gain industry experience
☐ I wanted to build my network
☐ I was trying to decide what I wanted to do when I graduate
☐ It was required to graduate
☐ I wanted to strengthen my resume
☐ I was encouraged to do an internship by someone such as an advisor, professor, parent, etc.
☐ Other

Please specify the other primary reason why you completed your EQM 399 internship?

Many factors contribute to why students complete their EQM 399 internship.

Considering this, on the scale below please place the marker where it best represents why you completed your EQM 399 internship. If the reason you completed it was a combination of both reasons please place the marker where it best represents your reasoning.

(Example: A mark in the middle means that you completed your internship 50% because it was required and 50% because you would have done an internship even if it wasn't required.)

I completed my EQM 399 internship only because it was required to graduate.

I would have completed an internship even if it wasn't required.

=====

(Place a mark on the scale above)

Please indicate how strongly you agree with the following statement:
At least one internship should be required for every Equine Science and Management Student at the University of Kentucky.

- ☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

Please explain why you believe students should or should not be required to do an internship for the University of Kentucky Equine Science and Management degree.

If an internship had not been required for your degree, how likely would you have been to do one?

- ☐ Very likely
☐ Somewhat likely
☐ Somewhat unlikely
☐ Very unlikely

How beneficial do you believe your internship experience was?

- ☐ Not beneficial
☐ Somewhat beneficial
☐ Very beneficial
☐ Extremely beneficial

Overall, how satisfied were you with your internship experience?

- ☐ Very satisfied
☐ Satisfied
☐ Neither satisfied or unsatisfied
☐ Unsatisfied
☐ Very unsatisfied

Considering that your internship was only part of your overall college experience, please indicate how strongly you agree with the following statement:

In general, my undergraduate experience at the University of Kentucky prepared me well for the following:

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither disagree nor agree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Creative thinking | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Information searching | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Problem solving | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Job interviewing | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Job networking | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Resume writing | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Leadership | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Teamwork | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Interpersonal communication | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Oral presentation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Written communication | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Considering that your internship was only part of your overall college experience, please indicate how strongly you agree with the following statement:

My EQM 399 internship, specifically, prepared me well for the following:

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither disagree nor agree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Creative thinking | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Information searching | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Problem solving | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Job interviewing | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Job networking | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Resume writing | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Leadership | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Teamwork | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Interpersonal communication | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Oral presentation | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Written communication | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview for this study about your thoughts on mandatory vs elective internships?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

(The interview may be conducted in person, via Skype, or over the phone depending on your availability and preference.)

Because you indicated that you would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview about mandatory internships we may be contacting you.

Please provide your first and last name to schedule a follow-up interview in the event that you are selected to participate.

What is your email address?

What is your phone number?

What is your preferred method of contact?

- ☐ Email
☐ Text Message
☐ Phone Call

APPENDIX D

T-test Results

Table 1

Paired T-test university vs internship skill preparation (all participants)

| <i>Skills</i> | <i>University preparation</i> | <i>Internship preparation</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> |
|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| Information searching | 4.206 | 3.784 | 3.89 | 0.0002 |
| Problem solving | 4.175 | 4.247 | -0.85 | 0.3952 |
| Job interviewing | 3.536 | 3.619 | -0.85 | 0.3966 |
| Job networking | 3.814 | 4.041 | -2.2 | 0.0302 |
| Resume writing | 3.773 | 2.959 | 6.88 | <.0001 |
| Leadership | 3.969 | 3.948 | 0.18 | 0.8538 |
| Teamwork | 4.082 | 4.34 | -2.41 | 0.0179 |
| Interpersonal communication | 4.082 | 4.268 | -2.38 | 0.0193 |
| Oral presentation | 3.948 | 3.34 | 5.62 | <.0001 |
| Written communication | 4.124 | 3.495 | 5.72 | <.0001 |
| Creative thinking | 4.000 | 3.866 | 1.24 | 0.219 |

Table 2

Paired T-test university vs internship skill preparation (Group 1)

| <i>Skills</i> | <i>University preparation</i> | <i>Internship preparation</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------|---------------|
| Information searching | 4.146 | 4.098 | 0.29 | 0.7721 |
| Problem solving | 4.098 | 4.293 | -1.48 | 0.1462 |
| Job interviewing | 3.707 | 3.902 | -1.21 | 0.2323 |
| Job networking | 4.098 | 4.244 | -0.95 | 0.3491 |
| Resume writing | 4.000 | 3.293 | 3.57 | 0.001 |
| Leadership | 4.098 | 4.293 | -1.24 | 0.2213 |
| Teamwork | 4.122 | 4.561 | -3.35 | 0.0018 |
| Interpersonal communication | 4.195 | 4.366 | -1.55 | 0.1281 |
| Oral presentation | 4.049 | 3.683 | 1.99 | 0.0536 |
| Written communication | 4.049 | 3.829 | 1.39 | 0.1728 |
| Creative thinking | 3.951 | 4.244 | -1.91 | 0.0632 |

Table 3

Paired T-test university vs internship skill preparation (Group 2)

| <i>Skills</i> | <i>University preparation</i> | <i>Internship preparation</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| Information searching | 4.25 | 3.554 | 5.27 | <.0001 |
| Problem solving | 4.232 | 4.214 | 0.16 | 0.871 |
| Job interviewing | 3.411 | 3.411 | 0.00 | 1.000 |
| Job networking | 3.607 | 3.893 | -2.06 | 0.045 |
| Resume writing | 3.607 | 2.714 | 6.13 | <.0001 |
| Leadership | 3.875 | 3.696 | 1.17 | 0.249 |
| Teamwork | 4.054 | 4.179 | -0.80 | 0.430 |
| Interpersonal communication | 4.000 | 4.196 | -1.80 | 0.078 |
| Oral presentation | 3.875 | 3.089 | 6.20 | <.0001 |
| Written communication | 4.179 | 3.25 | 6.67 | <.0001 |
| Creative thinking | 4.036 | 3.589 | 3.26 | 0.002 |

Table 4

T-test applied to Group 1 & Group 2 responses of internship skill preparation

| <i>Skills</i> | <i>Group 1 (N=41)</i> | <i>Group 2 (N=52)</i> | <i>Difference (Group 1- Group 2)</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--|----------|---------------|
| Information searching | 4.0976 | 3.5536 | 0.544 | 3.00 | 0.0044 |
| Problem solving | 4.2927 | 4.2143 | 0.0784 | 0.44 | 0.6599 |
| Job interviewing | 3.9024 | 3.4107 | 0.4917 | 2.51 | 0.0157 |
| Job networking | 4.2439 | 3.8929 | 0.351 | 1.94 | 0.0584 |
| Resume writing | 3.2927 | 2.7143 | 0.5784 | 2.76 | 0.0083 |
| Leadership | 4.2927 | 3.6964 | 0.5963 | 3.28 | 0.002 |
| Teamwork | 4.561 | 4.1786 | 0.3824 | 2.59 | 0.0125 |
| Interpersonal communication | 4.3659 | 4.1964 | 0.1694 | 1.11 | 0.2726 |
| Oral presentation | 3.6829 | 3.0893 | 0.5936 | 2.55 | 0.0144 |
| Written communication | 3.8293 | 3.25 | 0.5793 | 2.59 | 0.0129 |
| Creative thinking | 4.2439 | 3.5893 | 0.6546 | 3.74 | 0.0005 |

APPENDIX E

Part 2: Interview Protocol

Below is an outline of the format, timeline, and questions I plan to use for my interviews.

These interviews will be semi-structured with probing questions based on the respondent's answers.

Step 1: Build Rapport

These interviews will be with students who have completed internships. The first thing I want to do is show an interest in them and try to ease their apprehension.

Question 1: *Tell me about you. Where are you currently working and how is it going?*

Probing questions based on their response. Examples include: How did you get this job, what do you like about it, what are your future career plans. Etc.

Step 2: Exploration

I also want to build the framework around stating why I am interviewing them.

Question 2: *As you know from my letter, I am interested in exploring the concept of requiring internships and the effect that making them mandatory has on the internship experience. Specifically, I am interest in this in the context of the UK Equine Science and Management degree. I want to first thank you for your willingness to share your experience with me. Please feel free to stop at any time, ask me questions, and please answer as honestly as possible. If at any time you want to stop our conversation, that's exactly what we'll do. Can you please tell me where you did your internship and how you ended up with that internship site?*

Question 3: *In your own words, what was your primary reason for going on your internship?*

Probing questions based on their response. Did you go because it was required, because you were wanting to gain industry experience, because someone advised you to, etc.?

Question 4: *What did you learn most from your internship?*

Question 5: *What role did your internship being required to graduate play in your decision to go on internship?*

Question 6: *How likely would you have been to do an internship had it not been a requirement for your degree?*

Probing questions based on their response. Do you think you would have ended up at the same internship site, etc.?

Question 7: *How do you think your internship contributed to your career?*

Step 3: Descriptive Questions

Question 8: *How do you think your internship being required affected your experience?*

Question 9: *Describe to me how you benefited from your internship experience?*

Probing questions based on response. What is the best thing you got out of your internship, what was the worst thing, etc.?

Question 10: *Do you think you would have still gotten _____ (list their responses from question 7 & question 9) had your internship not been required?*

Question 11: *If you were in charge of the program, would you make internships required of all students, why or why not?*

Question 12: *Why do you think internships are required? (might ask this closer to the beginning of the interview instead of here)*

Question 13: *If I heard students talking about doing their internship before they did it, what do you think I would hear?*

Question 14: *If I heard students talking about their internship experience after completing it, what do you think I would hear?*

Question 15: *How would you describe your college experience outside of your internship?*

Step 4: Reflective Questions

Question 16: *Do you think students should be allowed to test out of the internship requirement?*

Probing questions: If so, how would they test out, what is the reason, what would they need to demonstrate proficiency in? If not, why not, what do you think all students need to get from an internship that they can not get from other jobs?

Question 17: *Do you think the internship for Equine Science and Management degree should be required of all students? Why or why not?*

Thank you again for your time and for sharing your thoughts. Is there anything you would like to share with me or add?

APPENDIX F

Informed Consent

For ORI Use Only:

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Investigating the Implications of Required Internships – INTERVIEW CONSENT

FORM

WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You are being invited to take part in a research study evaluating the policy of requiring internships for all students. You are being invited to take part in this research study because you have participated in the EQM 399 mandatory internship you can provide valuable insight and feedback on this program. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of about 354 people to do so.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

The person in charge of this study is Elizabeth James, Equine Science and Management Lecturer and Internship Coordinator in the University of Kentucky Department of Animal and Food Science. Elizabeth is using this study for her PhD Dissertation and is being guided in this research by her advisor Dr. Jeff Bieber, Associate Professor in the Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation Department at the University of Kentucky (UK). Her other PhD committee members (Dr. Willis Jones, Assistant Professor in Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation at UK, Dr. Fred Danner, Professor in Educational, School, and Counseling Psychology at UK, and Dr. Joan Mazur, Professor in Curriculum and Design at UK may be assisting at different times during the study.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the policy of making internships a requirement for all students. We are also interested in the different benefits that students associate with their internship experience.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

All students who have completed the required EQM 399 – Equine Internship course will be invited to participate in this study. Participation is completely voluntary. However, in the event that you feel there is some reason you cannot or should not participate you are under no obligation to participate and can skip any questions or quit at any time.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

This step of the study consists of an interview. In the event that you are interested and willing to participate in a follow-up interview you will have the opportunity to share your contact information to be considered. If selected a follow-up in person interview will take place at a location of your convenience on the University of Kentucky campus. You are in no way required to share your name or information or to be contacted for a further survey.

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?

This is a two part study. This first step of this study is a survey that will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Participation in this survey is completely voluntary and the survey itself is anonymous. If you choose to participate in step 2, which is a follow up interview, you will have the opportunity to share your name or contact information after completing the survey. Any personal identification or comments will not be shared in any way.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life.

WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There is no guarantee that you will get any benefit from taking part in this study. Your willingness to take part, however, will provide valuable insight and feedback on this program and to the general policy of mandatory internships.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES?

If you do not want to be in the study, there are no other choices except not to take part in the study.

WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?

There are no costs associated with taking part in the study.

WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

You will not receive any rewards or payment for taking part in the study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?

This study is anonymous. That means that no one, not even members of the research team, will know that the information you give came from you.

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

The final data for this study will get kept for a minimum of 6 years after the study is over.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is.

Please be aware, while we make every effort to safeguard your data once received on our servers via REDCap, given the nature of online surveys, as with anything involving the Internet, we can never guarantee the confidentiality of the data while still en route to us.

CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?

If you decide to take part in the study you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. You also have the right to skip any questions. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study.

The individuals conducting the study may need to withdraw you from the study. This may occur if you are not able to follow the directions they give you.

ARE YOU PARTICIPATING OR CAN YOU PARTICIPATE IN ANOTHER RESEARCH STUDY AT THE SAME TIME AS PARTICIPATING IN THIS ONE?

You may take part in this study if you are currently involved in another research study. It is important to let the investigator know if you are in another research study. You should also discuss with the investigator before you agree to participate in another research study while you are enrolled in this study.

WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

There is a possibility that the data collected from you may be shared with other investigators in the future. If that is the case the data will not contain information that can identify you unless you give your consent or the UK Institutional Review Board (IRB) approves the research. The IRB is a committee that reviews ethical issues, according to federal, state and local regulations on research with human subjects, to make sure the study complies with these before approval of a research study is issued.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Elizabeth James at Elizabeth.james@uky.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the staff in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky between the business hours of 8am and 5pm EST, Mon-Fri. at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428.

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CURRICULUM VITA

Elizabeth Ann James, BS, MS

Place of birth: Havre, Montana

Education

BS, Animal Science, University of Nebraska – Lincoln, 2002

MS, Animal Biology, University of California – Davis, 2005

Professional Positions

Lecturer, Non-tenure track full-time Faculty

University of Kentucky 2009-2018

Department: Animal & Food Science

Lecturer, Non-tenure track full-time Faculty

Bluegrass Community & Technical College 2008-2009

Department: North American Racing Academy

Equine Instructor, Non-tenure track full-time Faculty

Laramie County Community College, 2005-2008

Department: Equine Science

Honors

- | | |
|---|------|
| 1. Ken Freedman Outstanding Advisor Award, Nominee, UK | 2015 |
| 2. Teacher Who Made A Difference Award, UK College of Education | 2014 |
| 3. Inducted into Gamma Sigma Delta, Honor Society of Agriculture | 2013 |
| 4. Inducted into Kappa Delta Pi, International Honor Society in Education | 2013 |
| 5. Academy of Learning and Teaching Scholar, UK College of Ag | 2012 |
| 6. Outstanding Faculty, Laramie County Community College | 2006 |
| 7. Inducted into Phi Sigma, Honor Society of Biological Sciences | 2005 |
| 8. Andrew Christensen Fellowship, UC Davis | 2004 |
| 9. Teamwork/Support Award, Frucon Construction Corporation | 2004 |
| 10. Graduate Women in Science, Department Honoree, UNL | 2001 |

Publications

Refereed Journal Articles

1. LaBonty JL and LaBonty EA. *The Community is Our Classroom: Service Learning in College Classrooms*. International Journal of Humanities Education 10(2): 33-38, 2013.
2. Camargo FC and LaBonty EA, *2010 Kentucky Equine Youth Festival: How to create an event that will bring 6,000 people*, Journal of Equine Veterinary Science, (31)5,6:342-343, 2011

- LaBonty EA, Ball BA, and Sabeur K, *Characterization of a sperm protein responsible for sperm reservoir formation in the oviduct of the mare*, Center for Equine Health Research Review, 29, Davis CA: University of California-Davis, 2005

Articles

- LaBonty EA. Careers, Student Professionalism Series. Wildcat Canter, January 2015 (8).
- LaBonty EA. Lifelong Learners, Student Professionalism Series. Wildcat Canter, November 2014 (5).
- LaBonty EA. Perseverance, Student Professionalism Series. Wildcat Canter, October 2014 (5).
- LaBonty EA. Go, See, Do: The Benefits of Traveling Abroad, Student Professionalism Series. Wildcat Canter, September 2014 (9).
- LaBonty EA. New Beginnings, Student Professionalism Series. Wildcat Canter, Summer 2014 (5).
- LaBonty EA. Taking Risks, Student Professionalism Series. Wildcat Canter, April 2014 (11).
- LaBonty EA. Exploring Workplace Communication, Student Professionalism Series. Wildcat Canter, March 2014 (14).
- LaBonty EA. Equine Career Fair, Student Professionalism Series. Wildcat Canter, February 2014 (12).
- LaBonty EA. Bad Bosses: The Theory Behind Grin and Bear It - PART II, Student Professionalism Series. Wildcat Canter, January 2014 (13).
- LaBonty EA. Bad Bosses: The Theory Behind Grin and Bear It – PART I, Student Professionalism Series. Wildcat Canter, November 2013 (11-12).
- LaBonty EA. Networking, Student Professionalism Series. Wildcat Canter, October 2014 (13).
- LaBonty EA. They call it work for a reason, Student Professionalism Series. Wildcat Canter, September 2013 (11).
- LaBonty EA. You never get a second chance to make a first impression, Student Professionalism Series. Wildcat Canter, August 2013 (10).
- LaBonty EA and Capps TC, *Collaboration in Action: Equine Business meets Science*, Bluegrass Equine Digest, (34) 4-5, 2011
- LaBonty EA, *Welcome address*, Wildcat Canter, January, 2011
- LaBonty EA, *Welcome address*, , Wildcat Canter, May, 2011
- LaBonty EA, *Community Service Project Summary*, Wildcat Canter, September, 2011
- LaBonty EA, *When Two Worlds Collide: Examining the role of internships in building effective relationships between equine academics and the equine industry*, NAEAA proceedings, 2010
- LaBonty EA, *Tom Reed*, Laurus Literary Magazine, Lincoln NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000

Presentations

International

- Presented at 10th International Conference on New Directions in the Humanities Workshop: The Community is Our Classroom: Service Learning in College Classes, Montreal, Canada, E. LaBonty and J. LaBonty, 2012

National

1. Presented at National Social Science Association: *Using Internships to Guide Students through Perry's Model of Epistemological Development* , E. LaBonty & J. LaBonty, 2014
2. Presented at 4-H Youth Leader Training: *Preparing students for careers in the Equine Industry*, 2014
3. Presented at Uniting Higher Education and Equine Assisted Activities and Therapy: *Uniting EAA and Higher Education through Service Learning and Internships*, E. LaBonty 2014
4. Presented at National Social Science Association: *The 21st Century College Classroom: Beyond Brick and Mortar*, J. LaBonty & E. LaBonty, 2013
5. Presented at National Association of Equine Affiliated Academics: *Equine Career Fair: Uniting Students and the Industry for the Future* E. LaBonty & S. Coleman, 2012
6. Presented at National Association of Equine Affiliated Academics: *2012 Pilot Project Participants*, R. Coleman & E. LaBonty, 2012
7. Presented at Equine Science Society: "2010 Kentucky Equine Youth Festival: How to create an Event that will bring 6,000 people", F. Camargo, E. LaBonty, ESS, 2011
8. Guest Speaker, Jefferson County 4-H Awards Banquet, 2011
9. Poster Presentation at National Association of Equine Affiliated Academics: "Collaboration in Action: Equine Business meets Science", 2011
10. Presented at UK Equine Career Fair: *Resumes, Cover Letters, & Thank You Cards* 2009, 2010, 2011
11. Poster Presentation at National Association of Equine Affiliated Academics: "When Two Worlds Collide: Examining the role of internships in building effective relationships between equine academics and the equine industry", 2010
12. Presented at Kentucky 4-H Forum: *From Balance to Riding*, 2010
13. Guest Lecturer, "Cardiovascular, Nervous, Respiratory, Muscular Systems"; "Equine Health and First Aid"; "Equine Digestive System" Bluegrass Community & Technical College, 2009
14. Guest Lecturer, "Infectious Agents: Bacteria, viruses, protozoa, fungi" Equine Health & Disease, 2009
15. Presented Department Seminar, "Factors affecting gestation length in Thoroughbred mares" (Davies et. al., 2002), UC Davis, 2004
16. Guest Lecturer, "Performance Enhancement Drugs: What's legal and what lies ahead" Kentucky Thoroughbred Farm Manager's Club Meeting, 2003
17. Guest Lecturer, "Time Management" University Foundations 101, University of Nebraska – Lincoln, 2001

Interviews

1. Paulick Report: Special Guest - Female to male student ratios in equine higher education 2014
2. WUKY, Radio Guest – Equine Career Fair 2012, 2013, 2014
3. WUKY, Talk of the Track, Equine Career Fair 2013
4. WUKY, Radio Guest – Race Day Medications Discussion Panel 2012